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TSANGNYÖN HERUKA

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Published by the Penguin Group
Penguin Group (USA) Inc., 375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014, U.S.A.
Penguin Group (Canada), 90 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 700, Toronto,
Ontario, Canada M4P 2Y3 (a division of Pearson Penguin Canada Inc.)
Penguin Books Ltd, 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England
Penguin Ireland, 25 St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2,
Ireland (a division of Penguin Books Ltd)
Penguin Group (Australia), 250 Camberwell Road, Camberwell,
Victoria 3124, Australia (a division of Pearson Australia Group Pty Ltd)
Penguin Books India Pvt Ltd, 11 Community Centre,
Panchsheel Park, New Delhi–110 017, India
Penguin Group (NZ), 67 Apollo Drive, Rosedale, North Shore 0632,
New Zealand (a division of Pearson New Zealand Ltd)
Penguin Books (South Africa) (Pty) Ltd, 24 Sturdee Avenue,
Rosebank, Johannesburg 2196, South Africa

Penguin Books Ltd, Registered Offices:
80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England

This translation first published in Penguin Books 2010

3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA
Gtsaṅ-smyon He-ru-ka, 1452–1507.
[Mi-la-ras-pa'i rnam thar. English]
The life of Milarepa / Tsangnyön Heruka ; translated by Andrew Quintman ;
introduction by Donald S. Lopez Jr.
p. cm.—(Penguin classics)
ISBN 978-0-14-310622-7
1. Mi-la-ras-pa, 1040–1123. 2. Lamas—China—Tibet—Biography. I. Quintman, Andrew (Andrew H.)
II. Title.
BQ7950.M557G813 2010
294.3'923092—dc22
[B] 2010018244

Printed in the United States of America
Set in Sabon

For Maya

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Introduction

The Buddhism of Milarepa

In his eightieth year, as the Buddha was about to pass into nirvana, he told his disciples that after his death they should cremate his body and then build a stupa or reliquary at a crossroads, explaining that those who visited his stupa and venerated his relics would be reborn in heaven. After his passage, his body was duly cremated. But a dispute arose among his lay followers over who should receive the remains, and so the Buddha's relics were divided into eight portions and distributed among the various groups. The ashes from the pyre made a ninth object of veneration, and the bucket used to apportion the relics made a tenth. Thus not one but ten stupas were erected.

Not long after the Buddha's death, one of his chief disciples overheard a monk expressing relief that the Buddha was no longer around to scold the monks. Aghast at the sentiment, the disciple convened an assembly of five hundred monks in a cave on Vulture Peak outside the city of Rājagṛha, the site of many of the Buddha's most famous sermons. The purpose of the assembly was to recite what the Buddha had taught, both his discourses as well as the code of monastic discipline. First to speak was Ānanda, the Buddha's cousin and personal attendant. He had spent more time with the Buddha than any other monk, and the Buddha had promised to repeat to him any discourse he had delivered on those occasions when Ānanda was absent. Ānanda was also renowned for his prodigious memory. At this first assembly, Ānanda was called upon to recite everything he had heard the Buddha teach. He began the recitation of each discourse with his personal testimony,

"Thus did I hear." All texts that purport to be the word of the Buddha begin with this famous phrase.

A consideration of the Buddhism of Milarepa, as presented in the biography translated here, might begin by noting that the first chapter of the text starts with the phrase "Thus did I hear," and that it ends with a dispute over Milarepa's relics. These are clear signs that Milarepa was regarded as a buddha by his lineage, and that the author of the biography, Tsangnyön Heruka, made effective use of the tropes of Buddhist literature in the composition of the biography; the story of the distribution of the Buddha's relics and the opening formula of a sutra are renowned among all the Buddhist traditions of Asia.

A Buddhist sutra begins with "Thus did I hear," and then names the place where the Buddha was residing and who was seated in the audience at the time of the discourse. But here the Buddha is absent, or perhaps more precisely, Milarepa is the Buddha. The scene is not Vulture Peak in India but Belly Cave in Tibet, and the members of the audience are not the famous monks and bodhisattvas of Indian Buddhism, but Milarepa's Tibetan disciples, joined by some local Tibetan deities. The implication of the scene is that there was the Indian Buddha, Śākyamuni; there was Padmasambhava, the Indian tantric master who brought Buddhism to Tibet in the eighth century, sometimes referred to by Tibetans as "the second Buddha"; and there is Milarepa, a Tibetan buddha, born and enlightened in Tibet, without going to India or receiving the direct instructions of an Indian master.

One of the standard elements of the Mahāyāna sutras is for Śākyamuni Buddha to praise a buddha who resides in another universe, telling stories of his former lives as a bodhisattva, describing the glories of the buddha field or pure land that he inhabits. In the biography of Milarepa, his disciple Rechungpa (Ras chung pa, 1084–1161) has a dream in which he finds himself in what seems like a pure land, with buildings made of precious stones and inhabitants dressed in fine brocades. The place is called "Oḍḍiyāna, Garden of *Ḍākinīs*," indicating that it is a special place for tantric practice; Oḍḍiyāna in northwest India was considered by Tibetans to be the birthplace of

Padmasambhava and the place of origin of many important tantric texts and lineages. In this sacred place, Rechungpa is invited to attend the teachings of Akṣobhya ("Imperturbable"), the buddha of the East. As Śākyamuni so often did, the buddha Akṣobhya recounts the lives of other buddhas and bodhisattvas. He concludes his discourse by saying, "Tomorrow I shall narrate the life story of Milarepa, which is even more excellent than those I have just described, so come and listen." The members of the audience leave the discourse wondering where this buddha Milarepa might reside. Perhaps it is Abhirati, the eastern buddha field of Akṣobhya himself, perhaps it is Akaniṣṭha, the heaven that is the eighth and highest level of the Realm of Form (*rūpadhātu*) and, according to many Mahāyāna texts, the abode of the enjoyment body (*saṃbhogakāya*) of the Buddha. Rechungpa knows, however, that Milarepa is in neither place, but is rather in Belly Cave, just a few feet away from where he is sleeping.

Rechungpa's dream introduces a theme that runs throughout *The Life of Milarepa:* that there are two parallel universes, one profane and one sacred. In one, Milarepa is an impoverished beggar living on nettles in a cold and barren cave; in the other, he is a highly advanced yogin, practicing blissful sexual yoga with beautiful goddesses; in one, Marpa is a cruel and greedy drunk, demanding payment in exchange for his teachings; in the other, he is a compassionate buddha capable of purging the sin of multiple murder from his disciple; in one, Milarepa is a dangerous sorcerer to be avoided at all costs; in the other, he is a kind teacher willing to teach all who approach, even his evil aunt; in one, Milarepa is a murderer, in the other, he is a buddha. Much of the story is concerned with the failure of those in the first world, beginning with Milarepa himself, to perceive the second. After he becomes aware of the sacred world, Milarepa's compelling songs are often intended to shift his listener's perceptions from one world to the other. As Rechungpa's dream intimates, Milarepa occupies both worlds, suggesting that ultimately the two domains are one.

Buddhism arrived late in Tibet. The Buddha lived and taught during the fifth century BCE, and in the centuries after his

death his teachings were carried by his monks over most of the Indian subcontinent and north into what is today Kashmir, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. In the third century BCE, Buddhism spread to the island of Sri Lanka, then to China in the first century CE, to Southeast Asia in the third century CE, to Korea in the fourth century, to Japan in the sixth century.

Buddhism did not enter Tibet until the seventh century, its influence initially limited to the royal court. The first monastery was not established and the first Tibetan monks were not ordained until the late eighth century. A brief period of generous royal patronage for Buddhist institutions and for the translation of Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit into Tibetan followed, but this was cut short by the death of a pious king in 838 and the succession of his brother, who persecuted Buddhism. This began the so-called dark period in which Buddhism, and especially monastic Buddhism, declined across the Tibetan domain, remaining in the shadows for more than a century and a half.

Buddhism returned in the eleventh century, its renaissance sometimes marked retrospectively by three events. The first was the return to Tibet of Rinchen Sangpo (Rin chen bzang po, 958–1055), a monk dispatched to India by the king of western Tibet at the age of seventeen. He would spend the next seventeen years abroad, most of them in Kashmir, returning as a skilled translator of sutras, tantras, and their commentaries. The second event was the arrival of the great Bengali monk Atiśa (982–1054), who came to western Tibet in 1042 at the invitation of the local king. He spent the remainder of his life in Tibet, composing his most influential work there. The third were the journeys of Marpa the Translator (1012–1097) from his home in southern Tibet to Nepal and India, where he received the initiations and instructions that he would pass on to Milarepa. There were other important figures, but these three, two monks and one layman, two Tibetans and one Bengali, each contributed to different elements that were central to what Tibetan historians call the "later dissemination" (*phyi dar*).

Among the one hundred and fifty-seven text translations credited to Rinchen Sangpo, there are many tantras and tantric commentaries, works that set forth the elaborate world of the mandala, the initiations required to enter it, and the practices meant to transform the aspirant into the fully enlightened buddha who sits on the throne at the center of the mandala palace. Atiśa, although an accomplished tantric practitioner and exegete, focused his teachings on the practices of the bodhisattva, especially the cultivation of the aspiration to enlightenment (*bodhicitta*) and the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*) through insight into emptiness (*śūnyatā*) as set forth by the Madhyamaka philosophers of India. Marpa returned from his journeys to India with tantric texts to be translated but also with oral instructions of the *siddha* or "adept" tradition of Bengal, where enlightenment could be triggered by a spontaneous song or, as in the case of Nāropa, by being slapped on the head with the guru's shoe.

These three streams of late Indian Buddhism were just beginning to flow freely into Tibet during the eleventh century and the lifetime of Milarepa (1028/40–1111/23). But they were flourishing by the lifetime of his biographer, Tsangnyön Heruka (Gtsang Smyon Heruka, 1452–1507). Thus when we consider the Buddhism of Milarepa, at least as represented in his famous biography, we are considering Buddhism as it was understood and practiced in Tibet in the fifteenth century, projected back in time.

Nineteenth-century scholars of Buddhism in Europe tended to evaluate the various Buddhist traditions of Asia based on their temporal proximity to the founder. The Theravāda tradition of Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia—whose canonical language of Pāli was linguistically related to the language that the Buddha likely spoke, which was transmitted to Sri Lanka in the centuries immediately following the Buddha's passing, and which rejected the Mahāyāna sutras as spurious—was sometimes dubbed "original Buddhism." Chinese Buddhism, with its translations of early scriptures lost in Sanskrit, and its sober dedication to the Mahāyāna sutras, just as they were being composed in the first centuries of the Common Era, was

considered an exemplar of what was then called "Northern Buddhism." Tibetan Buddhism was denigrated as the most distant from the pure source, as adulterated with all manner of magical elements from the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet. Indeed, for some it did not merit the name Buddhism and instead was called "Lamaism." It is likely the case that the black magic that figures so heavily in the life of Milarepa, first made available to an anglophone audience in the 1928 edition of Walter Evans-Wentz, *Tibet's Great Yogī Milarepa,* did little to dispel this view.

But an alternative view is also possible, not one in which Tibetan Buddhism is suspect because it is not sufficiently early, but one in which it is particularly important because it is so late. Theravāda Buddhism was not unaware of the Mahāyāna sutras; it simply rejected them as the word of the Buddha and generally deemed them unworthy of study. Chinese Buddhism developed as the Mahāyāna sutras were being composed. It is thus very much a "sutra-based" Buddhism, one in which a particular sutra, the *Lotus Sutra* or the *Avataṃsaka Sutra* or the three pure land sutras, provided the focus for an entire school or regimen of practice. By the time that the period of the composition of the major sutras was over, Chinese Buddhism had already developed its own forms. The Chinese monk Xuanzang (602–664) departed from the Tang capital in 629 and traveled overland to India to retrieve Buddhist texts, returning sixteen years later to make some of the most accurate translations from Sanskrit into Chinese ever rendered. But the works that he translated were of limited influence because Chinese monks had already developed their own tradition of exegesis of earlier translations of many of the same texts. It was during the period of Xuanzang's sojourn in India that Buddhism was being introduced into Tibet for the first time.

Tibet received its Buddhism, especially in the second wave, just as Buddhism was about to disappear from the Indian subcontinent. Indeed, one of the reasons that Atiśa came to Tibet in 1042 was the specter of Muslim invasions and the fear that Buddhist monastic universities would be destroyed, a fear that turned out to be justified. Thus Tibet received and made

accurate translations of the sutras that were so important in China, Korea, and Japan. But it also received and made accurate translations of the treatises on Buddhist logic and philosophy, including the major works of the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools as well as the late Yogācāra and Madhyamaka synthesis, largely unknown in East Asia. It received and made accurate translations of the extensive literature on the buddha nature, the *tathāgatagarbha,* as well as important commentaries on the *Perfection of Wisdom* sutras, setting forth in great detail the structure of the bodhisattva's path to buddhahood, commentaries that had little influence in China. And Tibet received the transmission of the tantras, far more than were translated into Chinese, as well as the teachings of the great adepts of medieval India, the *mahāsiddhas.*

From this perspective, then, Tibet received the final flower of Indian Buddhism, the culmination of a tradition that stretched back more than a millennium to the time of the Buddha. *The Life of Milarepa* is rich in its imagery, woven into the biography by Tsangnyön Heruka, beginning with the introductory verses, where so many of the key terms and doctrines of Buddhism—mainstream, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna—are so skillfully evoked.

Some of these elements, although familiar throughout Buddhist literature, have a particular motivation here. One such element is lineage, so central to Buddhist histories, where authenticity and authority are measured by the unbroken succession of teacher and student, how this student received this instruction from his teacher, who received it from his teacher, eventually extending back across space—whether it be from Japan back to China or from Tibet back to India—and back across the centuries, ending at the beginning, with the Buddha (or, in the case of the tantras, a buddha) himself. In *The Life of Milarepa,* lineage is manifest in two ways, one retrospective, one prospective. The author is concerned here, as he is in another of his important works, *The Life of Marpa,* to establish a direct connection between Marpa and the Indian *siddha* tradition, especially with the *mahāsiddha* Nāropa. Thus he recounts Marpa's meetings with Nāropa at several points in the

text, and there are constant references to the teachings that Marpa received from Nāropa. Marpa did indeed make three trips to India to retrieve tantric teachings. But by the time he made his first trip to India, Nāropa had already died; Marpa studied instead with some of Nāropa's direct disciples. Works by Marpa's contemporaries make it clear that he never pretended to have studied with Nāropa. Yet by the time that Tsangnyön Heruka wrote his biographies of Milarepa and Marpa, the lineage of the Kagyu sect—beginning from the buddha Vajradhara, then to Tilopa, Nāropa, Marpa, and Milarepa—was well known, and it was necessary that it be reflected in their life stories. Whether Tsangnyön was himself aware of the lacuna in the lineage is not known.

Lineage figures prospectively in the form of prophecy. Prophecies are important elements of Buddhist literature, with prophecy (*vyākaraṇa*) listed as one of the nine (or twelve) traditional branches of scripture. Thus, in the sutras and legends (*avadāna*), the Buddha will often make a prophecy or prediction, usually of the future enlightenment of a member of his audience. Scholars find a different meaning in the Buddha's prophecies, using them to date Buddhist texts. Therefore, if the Buddha makes a prophecy about the emperor Aśoka, this is proof that the text was composed after Aśoka. If the Buddha makes a prophecy about the great Madhyamaka master Nāgārjuna, this is proof that the text was composed after Nāgārjuna. That is, prophecy is regarded as a device by which Buddhist authors project present importance into the past, enhancing that importance by expressing it in the form of a prophecy by the Buddha himself. In *The Life of Milarepa,* it is not the Buddha who makes a prophecy but Marpa, when he interprets Milarepa's famous dream of the four pillars, each surmounted by a different animal: a lion, a tigress, a *garuḍa,* and a vulture. Marpa identifies the vulture that sits atop the pillar in the north to be Milarepa, with the many small birds that fly above it his disciples. The Kagyu sect, flourishing at the time of Tsangnyön Heruka, originated from one of Milarepa's last disciples, the monk Gampopa (Sgam po pa, 1079–1153), whose own disciples would later found the four

major branches of the sect. If the date of Tsangnyön Heruka's works were not known, the presence of this prophecy would help to date the text at a time when the Kagyu sect was already well established, something that was not the case during Milarepa's lifetime.

These and many other elements together transform the life story of Milarepa into the biography of a Tibetan buddha. Here, however, there are no stories of the Buddha's former lives. Instead, negative karma that would ordinarily be accumulated over many past lives is created by Milarepa in one life, as he murders thirty-five people with a single act of black magic. The horrific karmic consequences of that deed, ordinarily resulting in many eons in one of the eight hot hells, is here foreshortened by Marpa, whose ruthless compassion forces Milarepa to undergo the suffering over a few short months of pitiful hardship. And rather than perfecting himself over many lifetimes as a bodhisattva, as the Buddha did, Milarepa undertakes the bodhisattva path and completes it in a single lifetime. Unlike the Buddha, who achieved buddhahood without relying on a teacher in his last lifetime, Milarepa did so through his deep devotion to Marpa and his strict adherence to his instructions.

Milarepa achieves buddhahood by the rapid method of the tantric path. In mountain caves across southern Tibet, he practiced the stage of generation (*utpattikrama*), visualizing himself as a buddha, his own body as a mandala, with various deities located at specific points within it. He then practiced the stage of completion (*niṣpannakrama*), in which he brought under control the various energies or winds that course through a network of channels in the body, causing those winds to enter the central channel that runs from the crown of the head to the base of the spine, generating both an inner heat (*gtum mo*) and increasing levels of bliss. Finally, he achieved the *mahāmudrā,* or "Great Seal," spontaneous realization of the most profound nature of the mind.

Yet despite all the references to the stage of generation and the stage of completion, and all of Milarepa's meditation on the channels, winds, and drops, as he approaches the achievement

of buddhahood his instructions to those he encounters continue to embody the most basic of Buddhist teachings: impermanence, the sufferings of *saṃsāra*, the certainty of death and the uncertainty of its arrival, the frightful rebirth that is the direct result of our benighted deeds. Beyond Milarepa's words is his example, his vivid demonstration, expressed in sublime song, that even one who has murdered thirty-five innocent people can, through devotion to the teacher and the practice of the path, transform oneself into a perfect buddha, where the dharma is present everywhere one turns, where "everything in the outer world appears as scriptures," where the profane is sacred.

DONALD S. LOPEZ JR.

Translator's Introduction

Milarepa, the eleventh-century poet and meditation master, is perhaps the most recognizable figure in the history of Tibetan Buddhism. In paintings, his slender torso is usually draped with a simple white cotton robe, the attire of a *repa* (*ras pa*, literally "cotton-clad"), or itinerant yogin. His face may look hollow from years of living in the frigid caves of Tibet's high snow mountains, or it may have a greenish hue from a diet of nothing but the broth of wild nettles. His legs are loosely crossed and wrapped with a special belt to help maintain a proper posture during long meditation sessions. His left hand rests in his lap in a gesture of deep contemplation. His right hand is held to his ear in the pose a singer might strike to better hear his own voice; his lips may be slightly parted as if singing one of the spontaneous songs of inner realization for which he is so famous. Surrounding him might be the many disciples he taught, or the demons he tamed and converted to Buddhism, or scenes of the miracles he performed. Such images would be instantly identifiable to all Tibetans, even the small community of non-Buddhist Tibetan Muslims and Christians. Members of every sect of Tibetan Buddhism venerate him as an exemplar of religious dedication and mastery. Many can recite his songs from memory.

Most of the stories and attributes associated with the figure of Milarepa stem from a single source: the account of his life translated here, *The Life of Milarepa*. It is difficult to overestimate the role that *The Life of Milarepa* has played in shaping the way Buddhism developed in Tibet and later came to be understood in the West. Numerous versions of Milarepa's life

story exist, some written within a generation of the yogin's death in the early twelfth century. The present version, composed by Tsangnyön Heruka in the late fifteenth century, almost four hundred years after Milarepa, draws upon many of these early works. But the resulting narrative eclipsed them all, serving as the canonical record of Milarepa's life ever since. *The Life of Milarepa* is now famous for its themes of sin and redemption, faith and devotion to the guru, perseverance in the face of hardship, dedication to meditative mastery, and the possibility of liberation in a single life. The story helped establish the founding figures of the Kagyu sect of Tibetan Buddhism. It shaped the sacred geography of southern Tibet. It served as a vivid inspiration for both the plastic and performing arts across the Himalayas.

OVERVIEW OF MILAREPA'S LIFE

While *The Life of Milarepa* paints a striking and often fabulous portrait of Milarepa the magician, mendicant, and Buddhist master, we have no independent record of his life from contemporary sources; indeed, we know very little about him as a historical figure at all. Even the dates of his birth and death have long been a source of disagreement among historians, both Tibetan and Western. Tsangnyön Heruka records that the boy was born in the male water-dragon year (1052) and passed away in the wood-hare year (1135) at the age of eighty-four—here using the traditional Tibetan lunar calendar that forms a sexagenary cycle by combining five elements with twelve animals. Other Tibetan sources move these dates back by one or two twelve-year cycles, suggesting instead the years 1040 or 1028 for his birth. Several sources posit his birth as early as 1026 or 1024. Translators of the story outside Tibet have generally agreed upon the dates 1040–1123, although a number of prominent Tibetan scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries favor the earlier span of 1028–1111.

Regardless of precisely when he was born, Milarepa appeared at the beginning of a new wave of Buddhist expansion

in Tibet, a period that Tibetan historians would come to describe as the "later dissemination" (*phyi dar*). This is contrasted with the "early dissemination" (*snga dar*), which took place during the height of the Tibetan empire between the seventh and ninth centuries. The period of early dissemination witnessed the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet, the construction of the first Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, and the translation of Buddhist texts from Sanskrit into a new Tibetan language, said to have been developed for that purpose. Traditional histories describe the disintegration of the Tibetan empire in the mid-ninth century, and with it the collapse of Buddhism in central Tibet, ushering in a so-called dark period lasting some hundred and fifty years.

Although recent evidence calls into question the extent, and even the existence, of such a dark period, a resurgence of religious activity did begin during the eleventh century in western Tibet, marking the onset of the "later dissemination." This was a period in which Tibetan translators traveled to Nepal and India, where they trained with tantric Buddhist adepts and returned bearing new philosophical and ritual texts. Milarepa's principal teacher, known as Marpa the Translator, was one such individual, and famously made three trips to India in search of new teachings. Several sects of Tibetan Buddhism, including Milarepa's own Kagyu (*bka' brgyud*, "oral transmission"), likewise trace their lineage back to this period. Indeed, members of the Kagyu sect venerate Marpa and Milarepa as the primary founders of their lineage in Tibet.

It was during this swell of renewed interest in Buddhism that Milarepa was born in the small village of Kyangatsa in southern Tibet, not far from the modern border of Nepal. *The Life of Milarepa* describes his ancestors as nomads from the north, one of whom was a Nyingma tantric practitioner named Khyungpo Josey. He became famous for his proficiency in subjugating harmful spirits, a talent that earned him both respect and wealth from the local community. During one such encounter with an especially pernicious spirit, Josey caused the demon to cry out in horror "*mila, mila,*" an admission of submission and defeat, not unlike crying "uncle." Josey then

adopted this exclamation as a new clan title and his descendants came to be known by the name Mila. Khyungpo Josey's great-grandson eventually gambled away his inheritance and the family was forced to leave in search of a new life elsewhere. Resettling at Kyangatsa, in the region of Mangyul Gungtang, they slowly regained their wealth. This allowed them to purchase agricultural land and construct a new manor house called Kazhi Dunggyé (four columns eight beams), an indication of its size, and described as "one of the most pleasant homes in Kyangatsa."

Milarepa, and later his younger sister Peta Gönkyi, were thus born into a prosperous and powerful family. At the time of his birth, here revealing the traditional preference for male offspring, his father declared, "I am delighted to hear the news that the child has been born a son," and so named him Töpaga, literally "delightful to hear." The boy proved to have a pleasing voice and a natural gift for song, thereby living up to his name. He was later betrothed to a local village girl named Dzesé. Toward the end of the first chapter, Milarepa describes his family in this way: "We held great authority and influence throughout the region, so the local nobility became aligned with our family and the peasants came into our service." At this point in the story, Milarepa seems destined for a quiet and comfortable life.

When the boy turned seven, his father was stricken with a fatal illness and prepared a testament that entrusted his wife, children, and wealth to the care of Milarepa's paternal uncle and aunt, with the provision that Milarepa regain his patrimony when he reached adulthood. The rapacious uncle and aunt instead appropriated the estate for themselves, casting Milarepa's family into a life of terrible poverty. While the boy was sent away to study reading and writing, the relatives forced his mother and sister to labor as servants. "With flavorless food, tattered clothing, and miserable spirits," Milarepa sadly reflects, "we did not know any happiness."

Driven to the brink of madness by the decline in their fortunes, Milarepa's mother then advanced a plan to exact re-

venge upon the aunt and uncle, revealing the depth of her hatred in a near-hysterical appeal to her son:

> I would like to see you draped in a fine cloak and mounted upon a horse with your stirrups slashing the throats of our hated enemies. Such will not come to pass; yet success is still possible by means of treachery. So I would like you to train to become an expert in black magic, curses, and casting hail. Then you should destroy all those who inflicted misery on us, villagers and countrymen beginning with your uncle and aunt, cutting off their family lines for nine generations. . . . Son, if you return without showing signs of black magic in our region, I, your old mother, will kill myself right in front of you.

Within the broad context of traditional Tibetan religion, the efficacy of black magic—curses cast from a distance or the manipulation of the weather—was unquestioned. Milarepa dutifully trained first in its rituals, murdering thirty-five people attending a wedding feast at his aunt and uncle's house. Unsatisfied with this gruesome result, Milarepa's mother then commanded him to cast a powerful hailstorm across his homeland. He did so just as the village's barley crops were about to be reaped, washing away the mountainside and wiping out the entire harvest.

Although his revenge seemed righteous, Milarepa felt remorse at the terrible crimes he had committed. In a major turning point of the story (demarcated by the transition to part two of the narrative), he begins to consider the Buddhist teachings as a means for expiating the karmic effects of his sinful deeds. With the encouragement of his old black magic teacher, he set out to find a Buddhist master, one able to instruct him in the path to liberation from rebirth, especially the rebirth in hell for those who commit murder.

His initial encounter with a meditation teacher of the Nyingma sect proved ineffective. The author's presentation here of the contemplative practice known as Great Perfection (*rdzogs chen*) seems little more than a caricature of the tradi-

tion, blithely promising liberation without the need for strenuous effort. This perhaps is meant to serve as a foil for the meditation system of the Kagyu sect, and for Milarepa's great determination, described later in the story. Milarepa takes these instructions literally, lazing about in bed and daydreaming about his newly found good fortune. But it is at this time that he first hears the name of his future guru, Marpa the Translator, which fills him with "indescribable happiness" and causes the hairs on his body to "quiver with joy." Once again encouraged by his teacher, he sets out in search of Marpa.

Milarepa eventually reached the region of Lhodrak in southern Tibet, where he encountered a heavyset plowman standing in his field. In reality this was Marpa himself, who previously had had a vision that Milarepa would become his foremost disciple. He thus had devised a way to greet his future student in disguise. The connection that developed between Marpa and Milarepa would become the most celebrated story of the teacher-disciple relationship in Tibetan Buddhism and an exemplar of the fundamental importance of devotion to a spiritual guide. Marpa, however, was famous for his fierce temper and did not immediately teach Milarepa. Instead, he subjected his new disciple to a continual stream of verbal and physical abuse, forcing Milarepa to endure a series of ordeals, including, in one of the story's most memorable episodes, the construction of four immense stone towers. Pushed to the brink of despair, Milarepa first plotted his escape and later contemplated suicide. But just when all hope seemed lost, Marpa revealed that Milarepa was, from the beginning, a disciple prophesied by his own guru, the Indian master Nāropa. He further explained that the trials were actually a means of purifying the sins committed earlier in his life. Milarepa then received numerous tantric initiations and instructions that Marpa had brought from India—especially those of *tummo* (*gtum mo*) or yogic heat, the so-called aural transmissions (*snyan rgyud*), and the meditation system on the quintessential nature of mind called Great Seal (*mahāmudrā*). Marpa famously commanded Milarepa to spend his life meditating in solitary caves and mountain retreats, persevering against all hardship.

Milarepa returned briefly to his homeland, only to find his mother long dead, her bones lying in a dusty heap among the ruins of his family house. Profoundly moved by this illustration of impermanence, he retired to a series of retreats not far from his home. Most famous among these is Drakar Taso (White Rock Horse Tooth), where he remained for many years in arduous meditation. With nothing but wild nettles to eat, his body withered and grew increasingly weak, while his flesh turned pale green, resembling that of a nettle worm. At last, after many years persevering in meditation practice, Milarepa gained a deep experiential realization about the true nature of reality and a mastery of the fundamental Buddhist truths, which he describes in this way:

> Thus, in general I understood all phenomena of life's round and transcendence to be interdependent. I further ascertained that the underlying basis of mind is free from biases. Life's round is the result of the path conditioned by wrong views. Transcendence is the result of the path conditioned by insight. The essence of both is emptiness and luminosity.

From that point on, Milarepa found himself able to perform all manner of miracles, transforming his body into fire or water and flying through space. At the conclusion of chapter ten, the central narrative of Milarepa's life comes to a close: he has become a realized yogin, deeply experienced in the practice of meditation and no longer encumbered by worldly expectations or societal norms. In a final act he forgives his aunt, both the cause of his worldly misery and the catalyst for his religious career, and then teaches her the dharma—illustrating a bodhisattva's perfect forbearance, and perhaps also a literary device, bringing the story full circle.

Chapter eleven poses a challenge for readers unfamiliar with the broader tradition of Milarepa's biography; its bewildering lists of retreat sites and disciples break the narrative so carefully constructed up to this point. As early versions of Milarepa's life story coalesced, authors began inserting dozens of chapters (in some instances, more than seventy) into the

break between the yogin's first extended meditation retreats and his death. These were cycles of religious poetry framed by brief narrative vignettes, and they recorded Milarepa's mature teaching career, his subjugation of harmful spirits, and his gathering of disciples at various locations across southern Tibet. Perhaps most importantly, they also catalogued the many songs of practical instruction and inner realization he famously sang throughout his life. These additional chapters more than doubled the length of the text, creating a cumbersome if comprehensive record. Tsangnyön Heruka was the first author to separate the biography proper from these narrative vignettes and compose two independent texts. The former became *The Life of Milarepa* translated here; the latter is the acclaimed *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa* (*Rje btsun mi la ras pa'i mgur 'bum*), translated into English in 1962 by Garma C. C. Chang. The hundred thousand in the title is not a literal reckoning, but rather a convention meaning "many" or "all," so the collection claims to contain everything Milarepa ever taught. Freed from the complex and lengthy stories of *The Hundred Thousand Songs,* the biography could now be read as a seamless narrative, spanning Milarepa's birth and training to his liberation and final passing.

This chapter thus summarizes all the various song cycles that were stripped out and published separately in *The Hundred Thousand Songs*. Indeed, at its conclusion the author explicitly notes, "These [events] are described at great length in the context of *The Hundred Thousand Songs*." Even though it covers the latter half of Milarepa's life with great brevity, the chapter still serves several important functions. First, it delineates all of the places Milarepa practiced meditation, effectively mapping out the sacred geography of the yogin's life for future practitioners and pilgrims. Many of these sites were caves, referred to as "fortresses": the six well-known outer fortresses; the six unknown inner fortresses; and the six secret fortresses, with the addition of several other locations. While such lists appear in earlier works, here the sites are each named by Milarepa himself, thus projecting upon them the legitimacy of the yogin's direct prophecy: "If you meditate in these places,

favorable circumstances will converge in your solitude and you will receive blessings of the lineage. Therefore, meditate in them." By this device, much of southern Tibet, extending into Nepal, is claimed for the Kagyu sect by Milarepa's biographer. The chapter also records the names of Milarepa's foremost disciples and establishes their roles in transmitting the Kagyu sect's teachings stemming from Milarepa and Marpa.

Perhaps the most vivid episode of Milarepa's life is his death, described in the final chapter. The account is filled with miraculous visions and signs, befitting the final passing of a buddha. The Buddha's death is said to have been caused by food poisoning; Milarepa was given poisoned food by a jealous *geshé*. Like the Buddha, Milarepa's body was to be cremated. The pyre beneath the Buddha's body would not ignite until his disciple Mahākāśyapa arrived; Milarepa's body would not burn until Rechungpa appeared. The Buddha's remains first caused a dispute over their ownership, but later served as relics to be venerated. Milarepa's disciples argued over who should take ownership of their master's remains, but here the narratives diverge. Milarepa's disciples awaken one morning to find his corporeal relics being spirited away to a celestial realm by *ḍākinī* goddesses. One earlier version of the biography presents a slightly different account. There, Milarepa's relics are divided into two portions, one of which is given to his divine consort Tseringma. A voice from the heavens then commands the disciples to cast the remaining relics into two nearby rivers, thus liberating all beings who come into contact with their waters. In both stories we find a rebuke of the disciples' fixation on the cult of relics, perhaps as a means for universalizing the yogin's teachings by detaching them from reliquaries and the monasteries that are inevitably built around them. Regardless, the disciples were left with little more than a strip of Milarepa's robe, a knife and flint steel, and a portion of rock sugar. But they also retained their memories of the departed guru, his teachings on the nature of mind, his songs of realization, and his vivid example of perseverance in the face of all adversity—the elements that would later constitute the relic of his life story.

THE LIFE OF MILAREPA AS A WORK OF LITERATURE

Since at least the nineteenth century, *The Life of Milarepa* has served as a primary source for the Western study of Tibet's religious and literary traditions. It was the first complete Tibetan text to be translated into English (although it was not the first to be published), and scholars quickly recognized the literary merits of Tsangnyön Heruka's work. The text is now regularly hailed as an exemplar of world literature. But *The Life of Milarepa* also served as a model for Tibetan biographers. The most common form of biography in Tibet is called a *namtar* (*rnam thar*), literally "complete liberation," signifying a literary genre that recounts the lives of religious figures with an emphasis on their practice of the Buddhist path and their spiritual awakening. Tibetan biographies are often filled with visions and miracles, as is *The Life of Milarepa*. For this reason, Tibetan *namtars* are frequently equated with the hagiographies of medieval Europe, which record the often fabulous lives of Christian saints.

Tibetan biographies, however, vary widely in terms of both content and style. One common taxonomy, into outer, inner, and secret biographies, gives some indication of this diversity. While an outer biography might recount an individual's mundane affairs, such as places visited and people met, inner biographies could focus on the subject's religious career, recording long lists of teachings received and meditation retreats undertaken. Secret biographies frequently record the visions and experiences gained through intensive meditation retreat. *The Life of Milarepa* does not strictly fit into any of these categories, yet portions of the story seem to reflect something of each. Tibetan literature also preserves numerous examples of autobiographical writing, although the line between biography and autobiography was not always firmly established or maintained; such is the case with *The Life of Milarepa*.

One of Tsangnyön Heruka's central innovations was to recast Milarepa's biography in the form of an autobiography. The switch to a first-person account, narrated by Milarepa

himself, is a literary artifice, but one that nevertheless creates a compelling story while also investing the text with an authority derived from personal testimony. There is also strong evidence to suggest that Tsangnyön Heruka believed himself to be Milarepa's reincarnation, an assertion that his followers promoted. In this case, the biography of Milarepa might then be understood not as an artificial autobiography but a real one, with the author speaking as his own biographical subject, recounting the events of a former life, a venerable genre in Buddhism.

Another important change that Tsangnyön Heruka made was to structure the biography in the form of a traditional account of the Buddha's life. The text's twelve chapters, each described as recording a specific deed Milarepa performed, are roughly modeled after the twelve acts of the Buddha as preserved in most Tibetan accounts. Rechungpa requests Milarepa to tell his life story by noting, "Precious Jetsün lama, buddhas of the past taught their inconceivable life stories consisting of twelve deeds and the like for the benefit of sentient beings." Rechungpa's unspoken suggestion is that Milarepa should do the same. The author explicitly outlines the text in this way, where Milarepa's twelve "marvelous and amazing deeds" are divided into three "ordinary deeds" and nine "supreme deeds of peace and transcendence." This framework, however, is little more than a conceit and most chapters bear only a general resemblance to traditional enumerations of the Buddha's deeds, which are often presented as follows: (1) descending from Tuṣita heaven; (2) entering the womb of his mother; (3) birth; (4) education as a youth; (5) marriage and birth of a son; (6) renunciation; (7) practicing austerities; (8) meditating under the bodhi tree; (9) subduing the demon Māra; (10) attaining buddhahood; (11) teaching the dharma; and (12) death and *parinirvāṇa*.

The text more closely resembles the Buddha's life story in its introductory framing tale, discussed in Donald Lopez's "The Buddhism of Milarepa" above. The story opens with the words "Thus did I hear," the phrase attributed to the Buddha's disciple Ānanda, reflecting his perfect memory of everything the

Buddha ever taught. These words signify that what follows is considered the authentic word of the Buddha (*buddhavacana*). In this way too, the present version of the biography has come to be accepted as the authentic words of Milarepa, and in this sense it has become the canonical version of his life. The life story thus resembles the famed *Lalitavistara Sutra,* a much-revered Mahāyāna text in which the Buddha narrates the events of his life at the request first of a group of Hindu gods led by Īśvara, and later by an assembly of his disciples. The life story then unfolds as a kind of religious teaching. If Milarepa has taken the place of the Buddha, his biography has become his teaching, the dharma.

There are many ways to read *The Life of Milarepa.* One would be for its presentation of the Buddhist path to liberation, which is how audiences have traditionally approached the story. The text is also valuable for readers interested in the social history of eleventh-century Tibet, at least as imagined four hundred years later. We find descriptions of village life and social structures, marriage conventions, travel customs, architectural design, and even the prominent role religious texts played as a form of family wealth. Milarepa occasionally discusses complex questions of Buddhist philosophy using the technical vocabulary of the tradition. But we also find in the story the theme of anti-intellectualism (Milarepa's murderer is depicted as a vain scholar of philosophy) and a disdain for institutions of religious hierarchy (he dismisses as fraudulent the wealthy monk Bari Lotsawa). These themes both seem to reflect Tsangnyön Heruka's own fifteenth-century perspective. The text also reveals Tibetan tastes in humor, as when Milarepa concludes his final written testament, after leading his disciples to believe they will inherit his hoard of gold, "Whoever says that Milarepa possessed gold, fill his mouth with shit."

Perhaps the most celebrated elements of *The Life of Milarepa,* and even more so of *The Hundred Thousand Songs,* are the yogin's poems interspersed throughout the narrative. These are presented as songs of awakening (*mgur*), spontaneous expressions of meditation experience and realization that served

as one of Milarepa's principal methods of instruction. Such poetry is deeply influenced by the Indian styles of tantric songs—the *dohā, vajragīti,* and *caryāgīti*—employed by great adepts such as Nāropa. Marpa and Milarepa are among the first Tibetans to make extensive use of these forms. Milarepa, famous for his singing voice even as a young boy, incorporated both the themes and structures of Tibetan folk songs and epic verse, creating a vernacular form of religious poetry. Beginning in the thirteenth century, a more ornate style of poetry developed in Tibet, in part modeled after early Indian writers such as Daṇḍin (seventh century) and his seminal treatise the *Mirror of Poetry* (*Kāvyādarśa*). Although far removed from the direct style of Milarepa's songs, verses of this type open and close the text as, Tsangnyön Heruka notes in the colophon, "embellishments" serving a "feast for scholars fond of grandiloquence."

AUTHOR OF *THE LIFE OF MILAREPA*: THE MADMAN OF TSANG

Nowhere in the text of *The Life of Milarepa* does the author record his name. Instead, in the colophon at the conclusion of the story he signs the text with the epithet "Rupé Gyenchen (dressed in bone ornaments), the yogin who wanders in charnel grounds." This image is that of the tantric *siddhas* of India, antinomian figures who lived on the margins of society, far from both village and monastic life. The name was cause for confusion among early translators of the biography, who either read the first-person narrative as an autobiography in Milarepa's own hand or saw the framing tale as an indication that the story was written by Rechungpa, Milarepa's close disciple. It was not until the 1960s that scholars of Tibetan literature identified the author of the narrative as the individual called Tsangnyön Heruka, the "Madman of Tsang."

Tsangnyön Heruka was born in 1452, a period of regional and sectarian conflict in central and western Tibet. (Tsang is Tibet's western province and thus forms the first syllable of his name.) But it was also a time of great religious and intellectual

innovation. He was one of several individuals identified during this period as religious madmen. The unconventional conduct of such figures is traditionally believed to reflect a profound realization of the true nature of reality, one that no longer discriminates between pure and impure, virtue and sin, secular and sacred. Modern scholars have interpreted such behavior as a reaction against the rising wealth and power of Tibet's monastic institutions by returning to a model of the itinerant yogin's life. Indeed, Tsangnyön Heruka spent much of his adult career emulating Milarepa.

Although Tsangnyön Heruka was ordained as a monk in his youth, at the age of twenty-one he renounced his monastic vows. He trained under teachers from various sects of Tibetan Buddhism, but his central interest was the so-called aural transmissions of Rechungpa (*ras chung snyan rgyud*), a corpus of carefully guarded tantric instructions passed on from Nāropa to Marpa to Milarepa, and then taught by Milarepa's disciple Rechungpa. He then spent many years in solitary retreat, during which time he exhibited transgressive and antinomian behavior. Upon his returning from the mountain wilderness of Tsari in southern Tibet with his body smeared in human ashes and blood and the fingers and toes of human corpses woven into his hair, local villagers are said to have given him the title *Nyönpa* (*smyon pa*), or "madman." He later received the epithets Traktung Gyalpo (*khrag thung rgyal po*), "King Blood Drinker," which incorporates the Tibetan translation for the Indian term *heruka* (*khrag thung*) that forms the second part of his name.

Even as Tsangnyön Heruka largely rejected Tibet's traditional Buddhist institutions, he also formed close ties with powerful political leaders in Tsang, who would support his religious activities. He visited Nepal three times, sponsoring major renovations of the famed Buddhist stupa and pilgrimage center of Swayambhū. He was also enlisted to broker peace negotiations between warring factions of western Tibet and Nepal. But Tsangnyön Heruka is perhaps best remembered for his major literary projects, including biographies of both Marpa and Milarepa. Traditional accounts of the madman's own life

record that a visionary encounter with Nāropa inspired him to write *The Life of Milarepa*. But we may also understand his biographical writings as a means for establishing the unequivocal authority of the early teachers of the Kagyu sect, of the instructions they transmitted, and of the yogic practices they espoused.

The colophon informs us that Tsangnyön Heruka completed the text in 1488. He was the first author to publish and distribute a printed edition of Milarepa's life story, with each page of text meticulously carved in reverse onto wooden blocks, which were then inked to make impressions on long strips of paper—a practice that had only recently become widespread in central Tibet at that time. He then distributed his new biography to the leading religious and political figures of the region. It was perhaps the printed form of the text that allowed it to circulate as widely as it did and which accounts, at least in part, for its widespread fame. This seems to have been the author's intention from the start. Traditional records make it clear that he desired to create a story that would appeal to members of all levels of society—from kings and ministers, to the religious elite, to lay householders—as a means for inspiring faith, accumulating virtue, and progressing on the path toward buddhahood. There is no doubt that *The Life of Milarepa* accomplished that task. More than five centuries later, it continues to do so.

A NOTE ON TRANSLATORS, TRANSLATIONS, EDITIONS, AND TEXTS

The first translation of *The Life of Milarepa* into a foreign language was a Mongolian edition completed in 1618. By the late nineteenth century, both Milarepa and his biography had become an important subject of study for scholars of Tibet in Europe and North America. The *Life* served as a principal reference for the Tibetan-English dictionaries of the Moravian missionary H. A. Jäschke and the British spy Sarat Chandra Das, published in 1881 and 1902 respectively. In 1925, the

French Tibetologist Jacques Bacot published an extensive, though incomplete, translation of the biography under the title *Le poète tibétain Milarépa: ses crimes, ses épreuves, son Nirvāna*. Although Bacot omitted the final chapter describing Milarepa's death, this was one of the first comprehensive accounts of a Tibetan figure in a European language, and the translation remains an impressive achievement.

The story appeared in English for the first time in 1928 as *Tibet's Great Yogī Milarepa*, the second of a quartet of books edited by W. Y. Evans-Wentz, an eccentric American spiritual seeker and would-be scholar. Although Evans-Wentz could not read Tibetan, he collaborated with the Sikkimese national Kazi Dawa Samdup (1868–1922), who was employed at the time as the headmaster of the Maharaja's Bhutia Boarding School in Gangtok and later taught at the University of Calcutta. Dawa Samdup had worked intermittently on a translation of the *Life* between 1902 and 1917, well before Bacot's publication appeared. But it was only after the Sikkimese translator died in 1922 that Evans-Wentz took an interest in the account of Milarepa's life. He received the manuscript of Dawa Samdup's translation from the translator's family in 1924 and published it four years later. Although this constituted the first complete English translation of the story (lacking only the opening *kāvya*-style verses), its language is encumbered by an excessively biblical style, likely added by Evans-Wentz to Dawa Samdup's generally accurate translation.

The text achieved even greater fame in the West through the efforts of Lobsang Lhalungpa (1924–2008), who published a new translation in 1977 as *The Life of Milarepa*. Lhalungpa served as a government official in Tibet prior to exile; he later acted as an interpreter for the fourteenth Dalai Lama and pioneered the first Tibetan-language program for All India Radio. Although occasionally erring when addressing Buddhist terminology and often overly free in its rendering of poetry, Lhalungpa's translation effectively served as the voice of Milarepa for a generation of readers.

The Tibetan source for each of these translations is Tsangnyön Heruka's composition entitled *The Life of the Powerful*

Lord of Yogins Jetsün Milarepa, Demonstrating the Path of Liberation and Omniscience (*Rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug chen po rje btsun mi la ras pa'i rnam thar thar pa dang thams cad mkhyen pa'i lam ston*). Although prints from Tsangnyön Heruka's original wood blocks have not yet come to light, nearly two dozen editions are known to have been printed across Tibet by the mid-twentieth century. For the present translation I have relied mainly on the critical edition by J. W. de Jong, who in turn based his work on editions produced in four locations: Spung thang, Bstan rgyas gling, Spo, and Bkra shis lhun po. I have also extensively consulted the editions from Ron 'Od gsal phug (perhaps the oldest extant edition) and Sde dge, as well as the modern Chinese reprint. For comparison, I have read many parallel sections from versions of the life story that predate Tsangnyön Heruka's text, including the so-called *Twelve Great Disciples* (*Bu chen bcu gnyis*), *A River of Blessings Relieving the Tormenting Heat of the Mental Afflictions* (*Byin brlabs kyi chu rgyun gyis nyon mongs pa'i tsha gdung sel bar byed pa*), and *The Life of Jetsün Milarepa: An Illuminating Lamp of Sun and Moon Beams* (*Rje btsun mid la ras pa'i rnam par thar pa gsal byed nyi zla'i 'od zer gyi sgron ma*) by G.yung ston Zhi byed Ri khrod pa (born ca. 1320).

In the translation, I have generally sought to strike the delicate balance between faithfulness to the text and transparency of its meaning. I have attempted as much as possible to avoid the technical jargon of Buddhism and "translationese" by rendering all words into English instead of reverting anachronistically to Sanskrit—recognizing of course that this runs the risk of creating a new form of English jargon. Some terms may therefore appear unconventional (such as "life's round" for the Tibetan *'khor ba* [*saṃsāra*]). I have left several Tibetan words untranslated, including *repa* (*ras pa*), and Jetsün (*rje btsun*). The former economically avoids repeating the somewhat cumbersome "cotton-clad," especially in songs where Milarepa uses the term self-referentially. The term Jetsün, a title of respect, renders the Sanskrit *bhaṭṭāraka* and is difficult to translate precisely. One Tibetan dictionary glosses it as follows:

"Someone described as a *lord* (*rje*) because he is like a helmsman among guides for others on the path to liberation, and as *venerable* (*btsun*) because he is utterly unsullied by the nonvirtues of the three gates." In accordance with this definition, the term is frequently translated as "Venerable Lord." The title is found ubiquitously in reference to the yogin, sometimes together with the name Milarepa, and frequently in the abbreviated form Jetsün Mila. In some cases, he is referred to simply as "the Jetsün." I have therefore chosen to treat it as part of his personal name. For clarity, I have added several section titles lacking in the original text: Prologue, Milarepa's Disciples, and Colophon.

It is often noted that translations are necessarily inadequate renderings of the original. Jorge Luis Borges's essays on translation suggest instead that "every translation is a 'version'—not *the* translation . . . but *a* translation, one in a never-ending series, at least an infinite *possible* series."[1] So too, this translation of *The Life of Milarepa* serves as *a* translation, one that seeks to provide a clear English meaning for Milarepa's eloquent Tibetan words.

ANDREW QUINTMAN

NOTE

1. See the "Note on the Translation" by Borges's translator Andrew Hurley in J. L. Borges, *Collected Fictions* (New York: Penguin, 1998), 519.

Acknowledgments

Although the process of translation often seems like a solitary endeavor, I am grateful for the generous assistance I have received in matters of both language and interpretation. In particular, I am indebted to Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche and Khenpo Tsultrim Gyatso Rinpoche, both of whom embody the living tradition reflected in *The Life of Milarepa,* for clarifying numerous difficult points in the text. I would also like to thank a number of individuals for their assistance and advice: Pema Bhum, Lauran Hartley, Khenpo Jigme, Thupten Jinpa, and Khenpo Karma Namgyal.

The Life of Milarepa

PROLOGUE

Namo Guru

In the sphere of the reality body, a celestial realm primordially free from the clouds of ignorance, your full form body, the sun and moon, radiates enlightened activities, limitless light rays of wisdom and love blazing with splendor, beyond the reach of demon Rāhu.[1]

They encompass everything that can be known and utterly dispel the passing darkness of bewilderment in all its forms about reality for all living beings of every kind, temperament, nature, aptitude, birth, time, and at every stage of the path.

For beings who entered or will yet enter the path propelled by their aggregate bodies and practice non-virtue without boundary or limit as if struck by a poison arrow bursting their heads into flames—your activities turned them away from all feelings and pain that result from this path and refreshed them instead in well-being.

Moreover, you set beings on the paths to total purity and then granted them the attributes of a powerful *nāga* lord[2]—to you known as Mila, lord endowed with the ten powers, glorious protector of beings vast as space, I bow down.

From the ocean of your compassion, waves of enlightened action benefiting beings crash down and fill my mind, a hollow hoof print, with drops of wisdom, jewels of faith, and more,

completely eliminating the privation and the burning heat of mental afflictions.

Thus I am suddenly overwhelmed with joy, like a passionate man confronted in a secluded place by a beautiful bejeweled maiden, maintaining his vows of chastity yet in light of her youthful and radiant splendor unable to take a step back.

When this life story, like that enchanting beautiful woman, adorned with compassion, fell upon this fortunate one's ears, though it had been concealed, in order to bring broad smiles and deep laughter by means of its amazing glorious splendor, I lay out this feast of words.

So, with the fragrant water of faith and exertion I cleanse the stain of concealment from this jewel of a life story, and then for the benefit of beings I offer it as the crown of the victory banner of the Sage's teachings. For this, may the lama and *ḍākinīs* grant their permission.

In the beginning of his life, here in the snowy land of Tibet, he developed a feeling of weariness toward the vast shortcomings of life's round, which is like a pit of fire, and a sense of renunciation. His revulsion was such that he did not aspire, even momentarily, for the happiness of the high states of Brahmā or Indra. Rather, having seen the qualities of liberation, like a lotus grove, and omniscience, he was drawn toward those instead. Endowed with faith, diligence, wisdom, and compassion, and free from even the slightest sense of anxiety or intimidation, he renounced both life and limb for the sake of dharma.

In the middle of his life, he was accepted as a disciple by an authentic lama and in solitary mountain retreats tasted the nectar that flowed from the lama's mouth. Thus he was freed from the fetters of mental afflictions, and the sprouts of experience and realization were born. Through his fierce determination to renounce the world, he became a perfect example of earnestly unfurling the victory banner of practice. Thus for his fortunate followers he cracked the whip that accomplishes the

path without laziness or fixation on ordinary worldly perceptions. He was cared for by his chosen deities and *ḍākinīs,* and with obstacles cleared away and his practice enhanced, his experience and realization increased so that he gained mastery in the dharma. Perfecting his devotion toward previous masters of the lineage, he received the transmissions on compassion. Thus he was endowed with the marks of the lineage's limitless and unparalleled blessings. Through the power of his expansive and powerful enlightened attitude, beings lacking the habitual patterns of virtue who merely heard his teachings or even his name transformed their outlook, developed goose bumps of faith, and were moved to tears. Thus he sowed in them the seed of enlightenment and was able to protect them from all fear of life's round and of birth in the lower realms. Maintaining the key points of the path of the messengers of Secret Mantra, the celestial wisdom consorts aroused in his body the bliss of the wisdom of the four joys and helped him to accomplish the path.

At the end of his life, he cleared away everything to be abandoned, the two obscurations and so forth, bringing all phenomena to the point of extinction, and he perfected all good qualities without exception, such as wisdom and love. Thus he became a self-developed buddha, a fact beyond dispute by anyone, Buddhist or non-Buddhist, and stood apart from them all like the crowning ornament of a victory banner. He quickly learned the path of the unsurpassed Vajra Vehicle and perfected experience and realization. Heroes and *ḍākinīs* proclaimed his greatness so the banner of his fame fluttered in all ten directions of the world. The descending joy from above spread to the tips of his toes and the ascending joy of stability from below reached the crown of his head. Thus achieving the resultant joy, the coarse and subtle knots of the three principal channels at the four wheels all unraveled on their own and thereby transformed into the essence of the central channel. For this reason he sang, in a completely unhindered way, vajra songs expressing the full underlying meaning of the twelve divisions of scripture according to the sutras, and the four classes of tantra.

All perceptions dawned as the reality body, so forms of dualistic thinking were expelled. He mastered inner awareness, so everything in the outer world appeared as scriptures. The power of his wisdom and love was unfathomable, so he was able to guide sentient beings who had been born as animals and establish them on the path of ripening and liberation. He had no need to accept or reject the eight worldly concerns or to save face, so he remained a magnificent, serene, and resplendent object of veneration for all beings, including gods and humans, and they all bowed their heads to him. He developed perfect diligence cultivating the profound path, so he became an unrivaled master, an object of worship by bodhisattvas like himself. With the great lion's roar of selflessness actually experienced, he overwhelmed the wild game of perverted views and strode like an unbridled white lion through the expanse of snow mountains, space without middle or edge. Inwardly, he mastered the meditative absorption of totality, so outwardly he overwhelmed and overcame all harmful forces comprised of the four elements, turning them into companions. He held firm control over subtle energies and mind, so he was able to demonstrate amazing behavior such as soaring in the sky like a bird as he moved and rested. He could perform all kinds of physical miracles, such as transforming his body into blazing fire, swirling water, or whatever else he desired, so he was able to dispel the wrong views of those who held them and instill in such individuals perfect view, meditation, conduct, and results. He perfected the practice of the four initiations, so heroes and *ḍākinīs* gathered like clouds at the twenty-four sacred lands of his vajra body and he became a Heruka lord of their assembly. He possessed a confidence that showed no fear, so he overwhelmed the eight classes of gods and demons and they carried out his commands, allowing him to spontaneously conduct the four kinds of activity.

He was a skilled craftsman who understood that all things have the nature of emptiness-luminosity.

He was an effective physician who cured the chronic illness of the five poisons with the medicine of the five wisdoms.

He was an expert on sound who recognized the truth of the natural sounds of all inner and outer phenomena, both pleas-

ant and unpleasant, and understood that they are all sound-emptiness.

He was an expert on valid cognition who clearly perceived all hidden phenomena, both good and bad such as the minds of others, and directly ascertained that all objects of knowledge lack a self.

He was a great *paṇḍita* of the essential truth who recognized all outer phenomena as inner awareness, and determined that the mind is primordially luminous, unborn, and empty, and that it is self-liberated, inseparable from the three bodies, a natural display that arises without obstruction.

He was able to visit, by miraculous means, limitless buddha fields of all-encompassing purity in a single instant. By virtue of his pure activities, he became the topic of dharma exposition and study by the buddhas and bodhisattvas in those realms. Thus the buddha fields were entirely cleansed and purified. For the six kinds of sentient beings, he manifested according to their individual levels of good fortune and taught the truth of the Victors' intentions by using dharma examples appropriate to their intellect and in accord with their worldly perceptions. Thus he ripened and liberated them.

In short, in one life and one body, he attained the four bodies and the five wisdoms, the high state of the great sovereign lord Vajradhara. In a state of immeasurable compassion, he taught the unsurpassed dharma and thereby released untold sentient beings from unbearable misery. Thus he was transported to the citadel of great bliss, the four bodies, spontaneous great liberation, where he remains, a supreme individual, the very best of men.

The amazing and wondrous deeds of the individual called Lord Jetsün Mila Zhepa Dorjé, who is as famous as the sun and moon, as they were perceived by his most excellent disciples, are inexpressible and beyond comprehension. However, while the preceding eulogy approximates them in brief and his deeds as they were perceived by his ordinary disciples are inexpressible and beyond comprehension, they can be succinctly divided into two parts: (1) the ordinary worldly deeds and (2) the deeds of supreme peace and transcendence. The first part has three chapters: (1) the deed of his birth, together with

the reason his paternal family was named Mila and the origins of his ancestral lineage; (2) the deed in which during his youth, with his father dead, his nearest relatives rose up as enemies and, bereft of both inner and outer possessions, he experienced the truth of suffering in its entirety; and (3) the deed in which, encouraged by his mother's command, he accomplished the activity of wrathful intervention and then annihilated his enemies. I begin with the first. Here I set forth an introduction to the amazing life story.

PART I

CHAPTER ONE

E ma ho.[3] Thus did I hear. At one time the Powerful Lord of Yogins, the great Heruka himself greatly renowned as Jetsün Mila Zhepa Dorjé, was residing in the sacred place called Dröpa Puk in the region of Nyanam, turning the wheel of the Great Vehicle dharma seated in the midst of his heart-disciple yogins, bodhisattvas abiding on the spiritual grounds, including Rechungpa Dorjé Drak, Repa Zhiwa Ö, Ngandzong Repa, Seban Repa, Khyira Repa, Drigom Repa, Lengom Repa, Repa Sangyé Kyap, Shengom Repa, Dampa Gyakpuwa, and Tönpa Śākyaguṇa; his fortunate male and female disciples such as Leksé Bum and Shendormo; rainbow body *ḍākinīs* such as the five Sisters of Long Life; and also gods of completely pure lineage, together with an assembly of human yogins and yoginīs.

At that time, Rechungpa was resting in meditation within his retreat cell. During the course of an entire night, he had the following dream: In a lovely and enchanting land called Oḍḍiyāna Khandroling (Garden of *Ḍākinīs*), he entered a great city where the houses and their foundations were all made from precious gems. The inhabitants of this city were all dressed in silken robes and adorned with ornaments of bone and jewels; they all had pleasing features and were beautiful to behold. Without uttering a word, they all exchanged glances, smiling joyfully. Among them was Bharima, the female disciple of lama Tipupa whom he had met previously in Nepal. She wore a red robe, carrying herself as the city's principal figure.

"Nephew, welcome," she said. "How excellent that you have come." She then led him inside a house made of precious gems, filled with an inexhaustible store of objects to delight the senses.

As a host would her guest, she plied him with the excellent and refined service of food and drink. She said, "At present, the buddha Akṣobhya is teaching dharma in Oḍḍiyāna. Therefore, nephew, if you wish to request the dharma, I shall ask his permission."

"Yes, indeed," said Rechungpa, who felt a strong desire to listen to him. And so they departed together.

At the city's center, Rechungpa saw the Blessed One Akṣobhya, more exalted than he had previously imagined, seated upon a high throne made from precious gems, teaching the dharma in the middle of an ocean-like assembly. Intoxicated with bliss and well-being, he felt as if he would faint.

Then Bharima said, "Nephew, stay here a moment. I will ask for permission from the buddha." She went to make her request and was granted permission. She led the way and they arrived in the presence of the buddha. Rechungpa prostrated himself at the buddha's feet, requested blessings, and sat before him listening to the dharma. The buddha smiled and Rechungpa thought, "The buddha has been gazing directly at me for a little while and is thinking of me with affection."

The dharma discourse focused entirely upon the genealogies, birth accounts, deeds, and life stories of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas, and as the buddha taught them, Rechungpa felt a faith that caused the hair on his body to quiver. Finally, he recounted the life stories of Tilopa, Nāropa, and Marpa, which were more extensive and even more amazing than when the Jetsün had told them previously. The entire assembly was thus completely overcome with faith.

At the conclusion of his religious discourse, the buddha said, "Tomorrow I shall narrate the life story of Milarepa, which is even more excellent than those I have just described, so come and listen." Some in the assembly said, "There couldn't be anything more excellent than the previous accounts; if there were it would be a marvel of immeasurable proportions." Others said, "The spiritual qualities of those who were previously described are fruits attained through the accumulation of merit and the purification of obscurations during the course of many lifetimes. Milarepa attained spiritual qualities not inferior to

those previous masters in one lifetime and one body." The first people said, "Well then, if there is such a marvelous dharma teaching and we failed to request it for the benefit of sentient beings, we would be unfit disciples. We should therefore have strength and determination in our three gates, and request it for the benefit of beings."

Someone else asked, "Where does Milarepa currently reside?" Some said, "He resides either in Abhirati or Akaniṣṭha." Rechungpa then thought, "The Jetsün presently resides in Tibet. In any case, I am inspired by such talk, so I should by all means request the Jetsün's life story for the benefit of beings." As he was thinking this, Bharima took hold of Rechungpa's hands and while shaking them said, "Nephew, you have understood. Nephew, you have understood."

Rechungpa awoke from this dream just as dawn was breaking. His awareness was clearer and his practice more potent than ever before. Reflecting on the dream, he thought, "It is amazing indeed that I listened to the dharma from Akṣobhya amid an assembly of Oḍḍiyāna *ḍākinīs*. Yet it is more amazing still to have met the Jetsün lama. Even my listening to Akṣobhya's teachings is due to the Jetsün's kindness. Those people said that the Jetsün dwelled in either Abhirati or Akaniṣṭha."

But then he scolded himself, "You belittled the lama, thinking he resides in Tibet. In this way, you showed your lack of respect, putting yourself on his level. In general, since the Jetsün is a buddha, his activities of body, speech, and mind are beyond comprehension. In particular, wherever the Jetsün abides is itself Abhirati and Akaniṣṭha. You are totally mistaken and filled with disbelief."

Afterward, he thought, "In my dream, the one who was teaching dharma, Bharima who was listening to it, and all the other signs were indications that I should request the Jetsün's life story for the benefit of beings. Therefore I should request it by all means." He was filled with an extraordinary devotion to the lama and he prayed from the depths of his heart and the marrow of his bones. He rested in this state for a little while, and within an experience that was a mixture of dream state and luminosity, five beautiful maidens appeared, standing in

a row before Rechungpa: white, blue, yellow, red, and green, wearing the ornaments and clothing of Oḍḍiyāna.

One of them said, "Milarepa's life story will be told tomorrow. Let us go and listen."

Another asked, "Who will request it?"

"The senior heart-disciples will request it," responded another. All the while, they fluttered their eyes at Rechungpa.

One of them said, "Everyone would be delighted to hear such a marvelous teaching, so we should each offer a fervent prayer."

Another said, "It is proper for the senior disciples to request the life story. It has instead fallen upon each of us to protect and propagate the master's teaching." Having said this, they vanished like a rainbow.

Rechungpa then awoke from this state of luminosity. The dawn sun rose brilliantly in the sky. He reflected, "I have understood the tidings of the five Sisters of Long Life." He prepared a meal while resting in a state of post-meditative experience. When he had eaten his fill, he went before the lama and found him surrounded by a resplendent, colorful assembly of resident disciples and lay followers. Rechungpa prostrated to the Jetsün and inquired after his health. Then, kneeling before the Jetsün with his palms joined, he made this supplication: "Precious Jetsün lama, buddhas of the past taught their inconceivable life stories consisting of twelve deeds and the like for the benefit of sentient beings. In this way, the teachings of the buddha spread throughout the world. And nowadays, fortunate trainees can be brought onto the path of ripening and liberation because lamas and adepts of the past such as Tilopa, Nāropa, and Marpa have also taught their own life stories. Now, precious Jetsün, in order to bring joy to your close disciples, to look after those who would become your trainees in the future, and most of all, to bring all living beings onto the path of ripening and liberation, precious Jetsün I ask that, out of your great loving affection, you tell the story of your life and deeds, together with the origins of your family line."

The great Jetsün replied with a smile on his face, "Rechungpa, you already know me well, but since you ask I shall answer

your request. My clan is Khyungpo. My family line is Josey. I am Milarepa. First I committed evil deeds. Later on I practiced virtue. Now I am free from both good and bad deeds, and having exhausted the bases for karmic activities, I will not conduct them in the future. Were I to explain these events at length, some would be reason for laughter, others would be reason for tears. Such discussions are of little use, so let this old man rest in peace."

Rechungpa prostrated once again and then offered a supplication: "Precious Jetsün, at first you practiced the profound oral instructions through asceticism and strong determination. Devoting yourself to one-pointed practice, you have now brought to the surface the abiding nature of things and have brought phenomena to the point of extinction. In the future, you will neither carry out nor experience any karma that could fetter you. This is understood by everyone. Yet there is tremendous significance in the reasons why your clan is Khyungpo, why your familial line is Josey, and why you were given the name Mila, and also in the reasons why the manner in which you first committed evil deeds and you later practiced virtue are the causes for laughter and tears. Therefore I pray that you look upon myself and all beings without indifference in body, speech, and mind, but rather with great loving affection. In this way, then, please tell your story at length. You vajra brothers and sisters assembled here, and lay followers who have gathered out of faith, join in my prayer."

After submitting this request, Rechungpa made many prostrations. The great heart-disciples and faithful lay followers also made many prostrations and then offered the same supplication that the sublime individual Rechungpa had made, repeatedly requesting that their master turn the wheel of dharma.

Then the Jetsün said:

When you again ask with such urgency and insistence, I have no reason to keep it secret, so I shall tell you my story. My clan is Khyungpo, descended from a great band of nomads in the northern region of Üru. My family line stems from a lama who practiced Nyingma mantra, a yogin who was the son of a nobleman (*josey*). Favorably received by his chosen deity, he gained

power in the practice of incantation. He set out to make a pilgrimage throughout the countryside and to visit its sacred shrines. Reaching a place called Chungpachi in the region of Latö Jang in Tsang, he subjugated the harmful spirits in the area and offered his blessings. His effectiveness in performing such activities brought tremendous benefit to the region. His following and his activities thus increased. He was then given the name Khyungpo Josey and remained in the region for several years.

Whatever calamities fell, due to illness, harmful spirits, and so forth, he was the individual who was called upon. Once there was a malicious demon that could not go near Josey but was insurmountably fearsome for everyone else. The demon descended upon a family that had very little faith in Josey, inflicting it with harm. The family called upon another lama, who performed a rite of wrathful subjugation and offered blessings, but they were of no use; the demon argued back, ridiculing and condemning the lama. At that point, unbeknownst to the demon, a relative of the faithless family advised them to invite Khyungpo Josey, stating, "One uses even dog fat if it cures the wound. So call him!" At this, the family invited Josey. He approached the demon and, drawing himself up, cried in a booming voice, "I, Khyungpo Josey, am coming. I eat the flesh and drink the blood of demons and obstructing spirits, so just you wait." He sprang forth as he said this and even before he closed in, the demon was stricken with fear. Taken by surprise, it cried out again and again, "O mother, O father. *Mila! Mila!*"[4] Many such terrified expressions fell from its lips.

Josey approached the demon, who said, "I have never bothered you, so please spare my life." Josey made him swear never to harm anyone in the future and sent him away. The demon then reached a family that supported him and said, "*Mila! Mila!* Never have I felt such agony and pain as I do now."

"Who brought this on?" asked the family.

"Khyungpo Josey appeared. He threatened me with death and I accidentally pledged an oath," said the demon, and he went away.

From then on, in order to express Josey's greatness and his fine qualities, everyone called him Josey Mila. His descendants

therefore came to be known by the name Mila. Since the demon never harmed anyone again, everyone agreed that it must have passed on to another life.

Khyungpo Josey then married a woman and had a son. This son had two sons, the elder of whom was known as Mila Dotön Sengé. To him was born a son named Mila Dorjé Sengé. From then on, his descendants each had only one son. Mila Dorjé Sengé was fond of playing the dice game *sho,* and as an expert gambler he raked in considerable winnings. At that time in the region there lived a man with many paternal relations who was a cheat and quite skilled at playing *sho*. In order to test Mila Dorjé Sengé, he played a game of *sho,* wagering a small sum. The man was thus able to size him up, and on that day he won effortlessly. Displeased, Mila Dorjé Sengé said he should be allowed to get even at dice the next morning. Wagering greater stakes than before, they cast the *sho* dice, and the man let himself be beaten three times. Finally he said, "I, too, should be allowed to get even." They agreed upon the size of the stakes and wagered their fields, their homes, and their personal wealth. They bound themselves by written contract so that there was no room for dispute and then they rolled the dice. The man won. His paternal relations seized control of Mila Dorjé Sengé's fields, home, and personal wealth.

The two Milas, father and son, then set out from the region, leaving their home and everything they knew. They reached a place called Kyangatsa in Mangyul Gungtang, and then settled down. The father, Dotön Sengé, carried out village rituals for the local inhabitants such as reading and reciting scriptures, offering ritual cakes, providing protection from hailstorms, and performing rites for protecting children. His services, which were very much in demand, brought him many offerings. During winter the son Dorjé Sengé undertook major trading trips to gather goods from Nepal in the south. During summer he gathered goods from nomad lands in the north. He also engaged in minor trade, gathering goods throughout Mangyul Gungtang. In this way, the father and son accumulated a great deal of wealth.

At that time, the son Dorjé Sengé loved a local maiden and

the two married. To the couple was born a son who received the name Mila Sherab Gyaltsen. While they were raising him, his grandfather Dotön Sengé passed away, and they performed an extensive funeral. Afterward, Mila Dorjé Sengé increased his fortune through trade and became wealthier than ever before. There was a man named Orma in the vicinity of Tsa who owned a fine, triangular field in Tsa. Dorjé Sengé purchased the field, paying out a good quantity of gold and merchandise from the north and south, and it came to be known as Orma Triangle. On the edge of the field lay ruins of an old lodging house belonging to a neighbor. He bought that as well and laid the foundation work for a manor house. While the house was being raised, Mila Sherab Gyaltsen turned twenty. In a prominent family of Tsa, there was a beautiful young woman of the Nyang clan named Karmo Gyen. She was skilled in tending to worldly affairs, clearly loathing her enemies and loving her friends. Sherab Gyaltsen took her as a bride and she became known as Nyangtsa Kargyen.

Construction on the manor house continued. On the third floor they built an open court, with a storage area and a kitchen off to the side. The house, which had four columns and eight beams and was one of the most pleasant homes in Kyangatsa, was known as Kazhi Dunggyé (four columns eight beams). They lived there in happiness and developed a good reputation.

Thereafter, some relations in Chung heard the reputation of the father and son, descendants of Mila Dotön Sengé. The son of Mila Dorjé Sengé's paternal relative, Yungdrung Gyaltsen, then left his home together with his wife, children, and his sister Khyungtsa Paldren and went to Kyangatsa. Mila Dorjé Sengé had great affection for his relatives, so he was overjoyed at their arrival and plied them with hospitality and gifts. He taught them how to undertake the business of commerce, and they too amassed a great deal of wealth through trade.

Some time later on, Nyangtsa Kargyen became pregnant. Mila Sherab Gyaltsen, having brought numerous goods from the south, set out to sell them in the vicinity of Taktsé in the north. A long time passed while he was away. On the twenty-fifth day of the first autumn month in the male water-dragon

year, falling under the constellation Gyal, I was born. My mother dispatched a messenger to the place my father was staying, entrusting him with a letter that said, "Here, at harvest time, a son was born to me. Come quickly to name him and to celebrate his naming feast." The messenger delivered the letter to my father and told him the story. Overjoyed, my father said, "O wonderful! I have already named my son. There has never been more than one son in each generation of my family line. As I am delighted to hear the news that the child has been born a son, I shall call him Töpaga (Delightful to Hear). Now that my business is finished, I shall leave." Saying this, he returned home and gave me the name Töpaga.

My family held a fine naming feast and then I was raised with love. Later, whoever heard my pleasing voice was cheered up, so people said, "That Töpaga was aptly named."

Then, when I turned four years old, my mother gave birth to a girl who was named Gönmokyi. Her nickname was Peta so she became known as Peta Gönkyi. I remember that we two, brother and sister, had dangling locks plaited with turquoise and gold. We held great authority and influence throughout the region, so the local nobility became aligned with our family and the peasants came into our service. While this pleased us, in secret the locals said, "These foreigners are immigrants to our region, and there are none more brazen or wealthy. Their house and fields on the outside, their farm tools on the inside, and the ornaments worn by both men and women are all a sight to behold."

With all his wishes fulfilled, Mila Dorjé Sengé died. His funeral rites were carried out on a grand scale.

Thus Milarepa spoke.

This was the first ordinary deed, the deed of his birth.

CHAPTER TWO

Then Rechungpa asked, "O lama, after the loss of your father long ago you encountered much hardship. Please tell us what that was like."

Milarepa continued:

When I was about seven years old, my father Mila Sherab Gyaltsen was stricken with a terrible illness. Doctors and diviners foretold that he would not recover and they abandoned him. Friends and relatives likewise knew he would not live. Even my father himself was resolved that he would not survive. Our relatives, including my paternal uncle and aunt, our friends, countrymen, and neighbors all gathered. My father intended to place his wife and children, together with all of his wealth, in the care of a trustee. At last he prepared an extensive testament ensuring that his son would reclaim his patrimony. Then he read it aloud for all to hear:

"I will say it in brief and out loud: I shall not recover from my present illness. Consequently, as my son is still young, these are the arrangements through which I entrust him to the care of all his relatives, especially his paternal uncle and aunt. My wealth includes all the following: in the highlands, yaks, horses, and sheep; in the lowlands, various tracts of land, Orma Triangle foremost among them, upon which the poor dare not even look; on the ground floor of the house, cattle, goats, and donkeys; in the upper rooms, utensils of gold, silver, and iron, turquoise, silk fabrics, and a granary. In short, my possessions are such that I need not aspire for any other man's wealth.

"Spend a portion of these for expenses after I am gone. The rest I entrust to all of you gathered here until my son is able

to support his own household. In particular, I entrust him to the care of both his paternal uncle and aunt. When my son is able to support his own family, he shall marry Dzesé, as they were betrothed in childhood. You will then return to him my wealth in its entirety and ensure that my son thus takes charge of his patrimony. Until then may all their relatives, led by their uncle and aunt, know the joys and sorrows of my wife and children. Do not lead them into misery. I shall watch you from my grave when I die."

With this, my father died. Our relatives performed the rites for the deceased. In agreement they said, "Nyangtsa Kargyen herself should take care of the remaining wealth, while we all should provide whatever assistance she needs as best we can from the side."

My uncle and aunt said, "Although some people are family, we are sincere family. We won't lead them, mother and children, into misery. In accordance with the testament, we shall assume control of the wealth."

Without listening to the arguments of my mother's brother or Dzesé's father and brothers, my uncle took the men's goods and my aunt took the women's; the rest they divided in half. Having done so, they said, "You, mother and children, shall serve us each in turn." Thus my mother and we children no longer had control of our possessions.

In summer, the time for working the fields, we were our uncle's servants. In winter, the time for spinning and weaving wool, we were our aunt's servants. Our food was food for dogs, our work, work for donkeys. We wore strips of tattered robe over our shoulders, tied with a jute belt. Forced to toil without rest, our limbs became cracked and raw. With only poor food and clothing, we became pale and emaciated. Our hair, once dangling in locks plaited with gold and turquoise, turned ashen and thin and became infested with lice. Sensitive folks who saw or heard us all broke down in tears. Gossip quietly circulated about my aunt and uncle but they acted without restraint. As we, mother and children, were beset with misery, my mother said to my aunt, "You are not Khyungtsa Paldren (Glorious Leader of the Khyung Tsa), you are Dümo Takdren (Demoness

Leader of Tigers)." My aunt thus became known as Dümo Takdren.

In those days there was a proverb: "When the false master aims to be master, the true master is put out like a dog." Such is what had become of us, mother and children. Previously, when my father Mila Sherab Gyaltsen was alive, everyone, both high and low, looked to see if we smiled or frowned. Later, when my uncle and aunt became rich as kings, it was their faces, smiling or frowning, upon which everyone gazed. About my mother the people whispered, "How true the saying, 'Rich husband, clever wife. Soft wool, fine woolens.' Now that no capable man is around, it is just as the proverb says. At first, while Nyangtsa Kargyen was sustained by a fine husband, it is said she was courageous and wise, and an excellent cook. Now her wisdom has dimmed and she is completely miserable." Our inferiors all ridiculed us behind our backs just as the saying goes: "When one is beset by misery, gossip will follow in turn."

Dzesé's parents gave me new clothing and boots and said, "When riches are gone, you needn't think yourself poor, since they are like dew drops in a meadow. In the past, your ancestors didn't acquire wealth until later on in life. For you, too, a time of prosperity will come." Saying this they consoled us over and over.

Then I reached my fifteenth year. At that time there was a field given to my mother by her parents as her inheritance, known by the unpleasant name Trepé Tenchung[5] (Little Boot Sole) but producing an excellent harvest. My maternal uncle cultivated the field and did what he could to increase its yield of barley while quietly stashing it away. With the excess he purchased a great quantity of meat, he ground a large amount of white barley into flour, and brewed a good deal of black barley into beer. This, he said, was for Nyangtsa Kargyen and her children to reclaim their wealth. Then we borrowed many carpets and laid them out in our house Kazhi Dunggyé.

We invited our close relatives, headed by my paternal aunt and uncle, our friends, countrymen, and neighbors, in particular anyone with knowledge of my father Mila Sherab Gyaltsen's testament letter read at the time of his death. To my aunt and

uncle we presented an entire animal carcass. To the others we offered portions, larger or smaller, according to their rank. And with beer in porcelain cups for good fortune and long life, we served an excellent feast. My mother then stood up in the middle of the guests, who were seated in a row, and said, "All right then. When a child is born, he is named. When beer is poured, there is talk. I also have a few words to say. Elders seated here in a row headed by uncle and aunt, you who know of my husband Mila Sherab Gyaltsen's testament proclaimed at the time of his passing, please listen closely."

My maternal uncle then read the text of my father's testament. When he finished, my mother said, "Since the meaning of this text and its proclamation is clear to all the elders seated here, there is no need for me recount it at length. Briefly stated, up to now both uncle and aunt have looked after me and my children with utmost care. Now, as my son and Dzesé are able to support their own family, I ask that you return our wealth that was entrusted to you, that my son marry Dzesé, and that he then take possession of his patrimony in accordance with his father's testament."

My uncle and aunt never agreed with one another, but they were reconciled in their greed, and I was an only son while my uncle had many sons. My uncle and aunt were thus united and said, "You have possessions? Where are they? Previously, when Mila Sherab Gyaltsen was in good health we loaned him a house, fields, gold, turquoise, crossbred yaks,[6] horses, yaks, and sheep. When he died, these possessions were returned to their owner. Do you own a single piece of gold? A handful of barley? A single lump of butter? A single silken robe? Even a single she-goat? We never saw any of these. And yet you speak like this? Who wrote the text of your testament? We were good enough to sustain you truly miserable creatures so you did not starve to death. But it is as the saying goes: 'When wicked men are granted power, they will measure out water by the ladleful.'"

My uncle blew his nose and suddenly rose from his seat. He snapped his fingers, shook the hem of his cloak, and stomped his foot. Then he said, "What is more, even this house belongs

to us, so you and your children, get out!" and he slapped my mother with his hand and struck my sister and me with the length of his sleeve.

At that point my mother cried, "O father Mila Sherab Gyaltsen, look at the fate of your wife and children. You who said, 'I shall watch you from my grave,' the time has come to look upon us." She fell on the floor weeping and rolled back and forth on the ground. My sister and I could do nothing for her but weep. Since my uncle had many sons, my mother's brother was unable to stand up to them. Those of our countrymen who were sympathetic toward us expressed their empathy for mother and children, and not one among them failed to weep. The rest sighed deeply.

Then uncle and aunt said to us, "You say that you need your possessions but you already possess many things. You have laid out a feast for your neighbors and countrymen without regard for the meat and beer that you squandered. Your possessions? We don't have them. Even if we did, we wouldn't give them to you. So if you are many wage war, if you are few cast magic." Having said this, they left. Those who sided with them followed them out.

As my mother sat there weeping hysterically, all those sympathetic to us, such as my maternal uncle and Dzesé's father and brothers, stayed behind to console her. They drank the remaining beer and said to my mother, "Don't cry. Crying won't help. Beg something from everyone who gathered here today at the feast tables. All of us here will give what we can. Even Uncle and Aunt will give something."

My maternal uncle said, "Do just that, and send the boy to learn a skill. You and your daughter come stay with me and work the fields. It is fitting that you do something useful. In any case, you must not be shamed before Uncle and Aunt."

My mother replied, "I have no control over our possessions. But I will not support my children with charity. Uncle and Aunt have no intention to return even a portion of our wealth. I will by all means send my son to learn a skill. Uncle and Aunt did not return to us what was rightfully ours, so we will run at the sound of the drum and run at the rising of smoke.[7] Then they

will see what we are really like. From here on, we will work the fields."

In Mithögeka of Tsa there lived a master of the Nyingmapa mantra tradition named Lugyé Khen, who was very much in demand for village rituals. I was sent to study reading with him. At that time, our relatives gave us a few things they had begged. In particular, Dzesé's parents gave foodstuffs and firewood and then repeatedly sent Dzesé to the place where I was learning to read in order to console me. My maternal uncle fed my mother and sister so they were not forced to go beg or work for others. My maternal uncle wouldn't let my mother beg, keeping her continuously engaged so that wool she spun on one day was that day woven. In this way my sister and I accumulated whatever useful things and money we could. My sister worked in the service of others as much as possible, and, running at the sound of the drum and running at the rising of smoke, she was able to obtain some clothes. With flavorless food, tattered clothing, and miserable spirits, we did not know any happiness.

Thus Milarepa spoke.

At this point, those listening to the discourse felt saddened and world-weary. In this state of mind, they wept and then, for a moment, all were silent.

This was the second ordinary deed, the deed of his practicing the truth of suffering in its entirety.

CHAPTER THREE

Again Rechungpa asked, "O Jetsün, the Jetsün said that he committed evil deeds early in life. Please tell us how he performed them."

"I accumulated misdeeds through black magic and casting hailstorms," replied Milarepa.

"What circumstances led the Jetsün to train in black magic and to cast hailstorms?"

Milarepa continued:

While studying to read in Mithögeka, one day I accompanied my master to the lower valley of Tsa where he was invited to preside over a great wedding feast. The alcohol was plentiful and people from every direction served the master beer. Drinking everything that was offered, he became drunk. The master handed over the gifts he had received and sent me on ahead. I was also drunk on beer, and as I had been captivated by singers earlier in the day, I too felt a desire to sing. I had a good voice, so I walked along singing. The path passed in front of my house and I was still singing when I reached my door. My mother was inside roasting barley and heard me. "What is this?" she wondered. "This voice sounds like my son's. But nowhere on earth is there anyone more miserable than me and my children, so how could he be singing?"

Not believing what she heard, she came to look. She recognized me and, in her astonishment, cast away the tongs in her right hand and the barley whisk in her left, leaving the roasting barley to burn. Carrying a stick in her right hand and a handful of ashes in her left, she flew down the big steps, leapt over the small ones, and appeared outside. She threw the ashes in

my face and struck me on the head several times with the stick, crying, "Father Mila Sherab Gyaltsen, a son such as this has been born to you! Your family line has been broken. Look upon the fate that has befallen us, mother and children." With this, she fainted and fell to the ground.

While she lay there collapsed, my sister came over and said, "Elder brother, what were you thinking? Look at mother." She wept, and as she did I realized that they were right. Then I too shed many tears. My sister and I rubbed my mother's hand and called to her as we cried. After a while, she regained consciousness and got up. Then she stared at me with her tearstained face and said, "Boy, can you really think about singing songs when nowhere on earth is there anyone more miserable than us, mother and children? When I think about it, I, your old mother, feel despair and all I can do is cry." The three of us, mother and children, wailed our lament and sobbed.

To my mother I said, "Mother, you are right. Do not be so distressed. I shall do whatever you wish."

My mother replied, "I would like to see you draped in a fine cloak and mounted upon a horse with your stirrups slashing the throats of our hated enemies. Such will not come to pass; yet success is still possible by means of treachery. So I would like you to train to become an expert in black magic, curses, and casting hail. Then you should destroy all those who inflicted misery on us, villagers and countrymen beginning with your uncle and aunt, cutting off their family lines for nine generations. See if you can do that."

"I will see if I am able, mother. Prepare offerings for the lama and provisions for me, whatever you have."

So that I might train in black magic, my mother sold half of the field Trepé Tenchung in return for a turquoise called Karchen Ötro (Great Radiant Star) and a white horse called Sengé Sabmé (Unbridled Lion) beloved in the region. She also obtained two bundles of dye and two packs of dried molasses, of which the two packs of dried molasses were used for our immediate needs. With this, my preparations were completed.

I rested a few days at a place called Lhundrup Guesthouse in Gungtang where I looked for traveling companions. Five ami-

able young men arrived. They said they were from Ngari Dol and announced that they were going to Ü Tsang in order to study dharma and black magic. I suggested that we travel together since I was also going to study magic. They agreed, and I led them to Lower Gungtang where I looked after them for a few days.

Meanwhile, unbeknownst to me, my mother said to them, "This son of mine has no perseverance whatsoever. As his companions, you should encourage him and ensure that he becomes thoroughly skilled in black magic. When you return here, I will show my hospitality and offer you a generous reward."

Then, with the two bundles of dye loaded on the horse and the turquoise tucked away on my person, we set out. My mother accompanied us for a long while and when we stopped to drink the barley beer she carried, she offered my companions much advice. At last she pulled me aside and grasped my hand over and over, unable to bear the thought of parting from her only son. With her face tearstained and her voice choked with sobs, she said, "Son, remember our misfortunes. You must do whatever you can to show signs of black magic in our region. The black magic of your companions and our magic are not the same. Theirs is black magic for the pleasure of fine young men. Ours is black magic for a desperate family. That is why you must persevere. Son, if you return without showing signs of black magic in our region, I, your old mother, will kill myself right in front of you." I promised, and then we parted ways.

Feeling a powerful longing for my mother, I looked back at her again and again and shed many tears. My mother also felt a strong attachment for me, her only son, and stayed there watching me with tears in her eyes for as long as I remained in sight. I had the heartrending thought, "Should I turn back, should I turn around and see my mother for just a moment?" I felt that mother and son would not meet again. Then, when we were out of sight, my mother returned home weeping.

After a few days, rumor spread widely that Nyangtsa Kargyen's son had gone off to train in black magic. We took the road to Ü Tsang and reached Yakdé in Tsangrong. There I sold my horse and dye to a very wealthy man and the gold I received

as payment I carried on my person. After crossing the Tsangpo, we turned toward Ü and at Tönluk Raka encountered many monks and nuns from Ü. We asked them for the name of a master in the region of Ü skilled in black magic, curses, and casting hail. One of the monks said, "In the village of Kyorpo in Yarlung lives a lama named Yungtön Trogyal of Nyak. He is an accomplished master of wrathful mantra practices such as black magic and curses." The monk was his disciple.

So then, setting out to meet lama Yungtön Trogyal, we reached the village of Kyorpo in Yarlung. When we met the lama, my companions presented only trifling gifts, but I offered everything, gold and turquoise. I said, "I further offer my body, speech, and mind. There are some people who live nearby in my region who envy my happiness. Have pity and give me your most potent black magic, one that will show signs of working in my region. Until then, out of compassion, please give me food and clothing."

The lama smiled and replied, "I shall think over what you have said."

But from that point on he did not teach us the deepest black magic. Rather, he gave us a few evil mantras that he claimed would make heaven and earth tremble and clash, as well as a few useful instructions together with their ritual practices. About a year passed in this way, and as my companions were all preparing to leave, the lama offered them each a fine cloak he had sewn from woolen cloth of central Tibet. But I was not convinced. I thought it would be difficult for the black magic I had learned to show signs of working in my region. And my mother would surely kill herself were I to return home without showing signs of magic. Thus I did not prepare to leave.

My companions said, "Töpaga, are you not going?"

"I have not yet learned enough black magic to leave."

They replied, "These instructions are all most profound if we are able to practice them effectively enough. The lama himself has said that he possesses nothing more. We no longer doubt his black magic. You go see if he will give you anything else." They offered their thanks and made prostrations to the lama, and then they left. I too put on the cloak given by the

lama and accompanied them until they took their meal. We bid each other good health and then they set out for their homeland. On the way back to the lama, I gathered horse and donkey manure, cow dung, and dog droppings, filling the bottom of my cloak. I dug a hole in a fertile field owned by the lama and buried them inside.

The lama, who was on the roof of his house, saw me and remarked to several of his monks, "Of all the disciples I have had in the past, there has never been, nor will there be, one more good-natured than him down there. A sign of this is that he did not come to wish me farewell this morning and yet he returned. When he first arrived at my home he requested black magic because, as he put it, 'There are people living in my region who envy my happiness.' He said, 'I offer my body, speech, and mind.' If the story of such a simple fellow is true, it would be a pity were I not to grant him black magic."

One of the monks repeated this to me and I joyfully thought, "I will finally get the black magic that's been withheld from me." I then went to see the lama, who asked, "Töpaga, why did you not return home?"

As a gift, I offered the cloak that the lama had presented to me. I made prostrations and touched his feet to my head. Having done so, I said, "Precious lama, there are three of us, my mother, my sister, and me. Some of our neighbors and countrymen, led by my uncle and aunt, have risen up as enemies and tormented us with all manner of cruelty. Powerless to retaliate against them, my mother sent me to train in black magic. If I return home without showing signs of black magic, my mother will kill herself in front of me. That is why I did not leave, and that is why I am requesting that you grant me the deepest black magic." I made this appeal and I wept.

"How have your countrymen tormented you?" asked the lama.

Sobbing, I described at length about how my father Mila Sherab Gyaltsen died and about the ways in which my uncle and aunt then tormented us. Tears also streamed from the lama's eyes, and he said, "If what you say is true, this is completely intolerable. The magic I cast will be sufficient. But I do

not assist people hastily. For this same black magic, I have been offered gold and turquoise by the hundreds and thousands from Ngari Korsum in the west; cases of tea and silken garments by the hundreds and thousands from the three ranges of Dokham in the east; woolen cloth and loads of butter and barley by the hundreds and thousands from the four regions of Ü and Tsang in the center; and crossbred yaks, horses, yaks, and sheep by the hundreds and thousands from Jayul, Dakpo, and Kongpo. Yet no one but you has said that he offers his body, speech, and mind. I will quickly verify your story."

At the time, the lama had a monk who was swifter than a horse and stronger than an elephant sent to my home to look things over. He quickly returned and said, "Precious lama, Töpaga has told the truth, so you should really teach him magic."

The lama said to me, "If I had rushed to give you black magic right away, I feared that a simple fellow such as you would have made me regret it. Since you have told the truth, you will now be granted black magic, but you must go to another master to study it. I possess a black magic rite called Zadong Marnak (Dark Red Faced Dza) that, when cast, kills with the syllable *hūṃ* and causes unconsciousness with the syllable *phaṭ*. In the region called Nup Khulung in Tsangrong lives the Khulungpa lama named Yönten Gyatso, knowledgeable in both medicine and mantra, and I gave this practice to him. He possesses the practice of casting hailstorms by pointing one's finger, which he gave to me. As we then became close friends, those who come to me to study black magic I send to him and those who go to him to study hail casting he sends to me. For this reason, I will also send you to him together with my son."

He provided me and his elder son named Darma Wangchuk with a crossbred yak loaded with thick wool and blended flannel from Ü province together with a small gift and sealed letter. Having then reached Nup Khulung in Tsangrong, we met lama Nubchungwa Yönten Gyatso and offered him the woolens along with the gift and letter from the lama. Explaining the circumstances of my situation in detail, I requested that he agree to teach me black magic.

The lama said, "The lama has been my friend for a long time and is true to his word. I shall certainly teach you two the instructions for black magic. On that mountain spur down there, construct a retreat cell where you will not be disturbed by human hands."

The cell had three stories below and one story above in which we placed sturdy beams, aligned side by side like rows of fish. We secured the perimeter with boulders nearly the size of yaks, leaving no gaps between them. We thus made the retreat cell so that others could neither discover its door nor find a way to infiltrate its walls. The master then gave instructions on black magic. We practiced the magic and seven days passed. The lama came and said, "In the past, seven days were sufficient. That should be enough this time too."

I replied, "Since this is black magic cast from a great distance, I ask that we continue for another seven days."

"In that case," he said, "continue to practice."

On the evening of the fourteenth day, the lama returned and said, "Tonight, signs of black magic will appear at the edge of the mandala." That night, oath-bound protectors of the teachings appeared carrying thirty-five human heads and hearts, covered in blood. They said, "For some days, you have called upon us and this is just what you have asked for," and they piled the heads and hearts at the edge of the mandala.

In the morning, the lama returned and said, "There remain two people to be liberated. Should they be killed or spared?"

"Spare them," I replied, "in order to make known my satisfaction and justice." They were left alone, and thus my uncle and aunt were spared. We offered ritual cakes and a thanksgiving feast to the oath-bound dharma protectors and then left the retreat. Remains of the retreat cell are still present in Khulung.

Meanwhile, I wondered how signs of black magic had manifested in my homeland of Kyangatsa. There had been a wedding feast for my uncle's elder son to receive his bride. Thirty-five people who despised us gathered in the house, led by my uncle's sons and their wives. Other guests and those partial to us talked among themselves on the way to the house. They said, "As the saying goes, 'When the false master aims to be master, the mas-

ter is put out like a dog,' so too have these terrible people acted. If the power of Töpaga's incantation does not work against them, the power of the truth of the Precious Jewels will."

Those who were coming to the gathering had not yet entered the house, and my uncle and aunt stood outside discussing what food to offer and what greeting to pay to each person. At that moment, a former servant of mine who now worked for my uncle went to draw water. She did not see the many horses tethered in the courtyard, but instead saw it filled with scorpions, spiders, snakes, tadpoles, and the like. In their midst stood a scorpion as big as a yak, thrusting its claws around a pillar and tearing it out. She fled in terror, and just as she landed outside, the many stallions that were tethered together with the mares riled the females, causing all the horses to startle and rear, while the mares kicked at the stallions. Pillars were struck and they toppled. The house collapsed, and under the rubble some thirty-five people died, including my uncle's sons and their wives. The house was filled with corpses and shrouded in a swirl of dust.

Seeing the calamity that filled the area outside, Peta rushed to my mother and gave an account, saying, "Mother! Mother! Uncle's house has collapsed and many people have died. Come look."

My mother wondered whether it was true or not and, overwhelmed with joy, she went to look. Upon seeing my uncle's house reduced to a swirling cloud of dust and hearing the valley filled with mournful cries, she was as happy as she was astonished. Right then, my mother fastened a tattered rag to the end of a long stick and holding it aloft she cried in a loud voice, "I present this before you, please accept it, gods, lamas, and the Triple Gem. All you neighbors and countrymen, has a son been born to Mila Sherab Gyaltsen? I, Nyangtsa Kargyen, have worn tattered clothes and eaten bad food in order to provide for my son day in and day out. Look and see if it has paid off. Previously Uncle and Aunt said, 'If you are many wage war, if you are few cast magic.' Now, magic cast by the few has gained more than war waged by many. Look at the people in the upper stories. Look at the animals below. Look at the riches in be-

tween. I have lived a long time and have at last witnessed such a spectacle displayed by my son. Look! Could I, Nyangtsa Kargyen, be happier than I am right now?"

Everyone who had not yet returned home heard her gloating. Some said, "She's right!" Others said, "She's right, but she is overdoing it now." All those who had relatives die in the calamity heard my mother. Gathering together, they said, "It's not enough that she caused this disaster! Now she gloats! How despicable! Torture her and rip out her beating heart."

The elders said, "What is the use of killing her? It is her boy who has brought this upon us. Indeed it was him alone. Therefore, first find her boy and kill him with your own hands however you can. Then it will be easy to kill her." They agreed upon this.

My uncle heard this and said, "Now I have neither sons nor daughters left to lose. Me, I will be happy if I die." He set off to kill my mother, but my countrymen held him back, saying, "First of all, it is because you did not keep your word that this calamity has befallen the region. And now, if you carry out your plan without killing her boy, we will oppose you." Thus my uncle was left without a chance to act. My countrymen then conspired to set out and kill me.

My maternal uncle went to my mother and said, "With your speech yesterday and the way you acted, our countrymen are waiting to kill you and your son with their own hands. What did you hope to achieve? You should have been satisfied that the black magic worked." In this way, he scolded her at length.

My mother replied, "These things didn't happen to you, brother! I agree with what you are saying, but it's difficult to show restraint when all my wealth has been stolen in this way." And without saying another word, she broke down in tears. Her brother continued, "It's true. You are right. But now I'm worried that people will come to kill you, so lock yourself behind closed doors."

After he left, she barred the doors and thought things over for a long while. Meanwhile, my uncle's servant, who had formerly worked for us, heard the people conspiring. She still felt affection for my family, and so, unable to bear the thought of

such retribution, she sent word to my mother, reporting what they had discussed and saying that she should therefore look out for her son's life.

My mother thought, "Their plotting dashes my happiness for the time being." She sold the remaining half of her field Trepé Tenchung, receiving seven ounces of gold.[8] Since there was no one in the region she could send, and since no messenger from elsewhere had appeared, my mother thought she herself would come see me in order to bring provisions and offer advice. At that moment, a yogin from the region of Ü who was returning from a pilgrimage to Nepal showed up, begging for alms. My mother asked him his story in detail and determined he would make a suitable messenger.

"Rest here a few days," she said. "I have a son in the region of Ü Tsang and I have some news to send him. Please help to deliver it." During that time she made him feel comfortable with kind hospitality. My mother then lit a butter lamp and made the following prayer: "If my wishes will be fulfilled, may the butter lamp remain lit for a long time. But if they will not be fulfilled may the lamp quickly die out. May Töpaga's lama and the dharma protectors make it so."

The lamp lasted a whole day and night, so my mother believed her wishes would be fulfilled. She said, "Yogin, clothing and shoes are essential for traveling across the country, so you'll need patches and shoe leather." She gave him leather strips for his boots, and she herself patched the worn cloak that he wore. Unbeknownst to the yogin, she hid the seven ounces of gold inside the back of the cloak, over which she placed a square patch of black cloth. She secured it by embroidering stars of coarse white thread in the center, resembling the form of the constellation Pleiades, which could not be seen from the outside. She further offered the yogin a handsome gift and gave him a sealed letter written in code. Then she sent him off.

Afterward, my mother thought, "Since I do not know what my countrymen have conspired to do, I should adopt a menacing air." She then instructed Peta, "Inform everyone that your brother has given a letter to the yogin who was here yesterday."

My mother wrote and sealed a letter to look like it had been sent by me. It said:

> Mother and sister, I trust you are well and that you have witnessed signs of black magic. If any of our countrymen in particular treat you with hostility, send me a letter with their family names. Using the black arts, it is easier to snuff out a man's life than it is to offer a pinch of food, so I can cut off their family line for nine generations. If the entire countryside acts with hostility, you, mother and sister, should leave and come here and I will destroy the region without leaving a trace. I have not been hindered in my practice for lack of resources or provisions, so do not worry about me.

She first showed the letter to my maternal uncle and friends of the family. Then she left it in her brother's hands so that everyone would see it. As a result, they talked it over and abandoned their plan to kill her. Then they took the field Orma Triangle from my paternal uncle and returned it to my mother.

Meanwhile, the yogin came looking for me. He heard that I was in Nup Khulung and then found me there. He reported in detail the events that had transpired in my region concerning my mother, my sister, and so forth. Then he turned over the letter and I read it off to one side. It said:

> Töpaga, I trust you are in good health. The son born to his old mother has seen her wishes fulfilled. The family line of father Mila Sherab Gyaltsen has been upheld. Signs of black magic have appeared in the region. Thirty-five people have perished under the house that collapsed. This, however, has caused the countrymen to act less than hospitably toward your sister and me. So now cast a hailstorm, a "nine-brick-high" storm. With this, the wishes of your old mother will be fulfilled.
>
> The countrymen here say they will send a party to search for you, and after they have killed you they will also kill me. Therefore, for both of our sakes, mother and son, watch out for yourself with great care. If you are short on provisions, look in the region facing north where a black cloud hovers and the constellation Pleiades

> appears. Beneath them dwell seven of our relations who possess whatever provisions you desire, so take them. If you do not find them, this yogin lives in that region so do not ask anyone else.

I did not understand what the letter meant. I thought of my homeland and my mother. With my provisions at an end, I would soon be destitute, but I was unfamiliar with that region or those relations so I broke down in tears. I asked the yogin, "You know the region where my relatives live. Where is it?"

"It is Ngari Gungtang," he replied.

"Don't you know any others? Where is your homeland?"

"I know many other regions, but I do not know any where your relatives live. I am from Ü."

"Well then, stay here a bit. I will be right back." I then presented the letter to the lama and reported what had transpired. He read through the letter once. Then he said, "Töpaga, your mother is filled with hatred. Even after the death of so many people she has now asked you to cast a hailstorm. Who are your relations to the north?"

I replied, "I have never heard that I had any. It is the letter that mentions them. I asked the yogin but he doesn't know either."

The lama's wife, who possessed the marks of a wisdom *ḍākinī,* read the letter once aloud and then said, "Call the yogin inside."

I called him and she then lit a large fire. Serving him some delicious beer, she had the cloak removed from the yogin's back. The lama's wife put it on and pranced back and forth saying, "What fun it would be to wear such a cloak and travel around the countryside." Then, having slipped up to the roof, the lama's wife removed the gold from inside the cloak. She resewed the patch as before and draped the cloak over the yogin. After serving him the evening meal, she took him to other quarters. Then the lama's wife said, "Tell Töpaga to come here before the lama." When I arrived, she handed over the seven ounces of gold.

"Where did the gold come from?" I asked.

"It was inside the yogin's cloak," she replied. "Töpaga has quite a clever mother. 'Look to the region facing north,' which is

like a place where the sun does not shine forth, means the yogin's cloak where the sun does not shine. 'A black cloud hovers' means the square patch of black cloth sewn on it. 'The constellation Pleiades appears' means the light needlework of white thread. 'The seven relations below it' means the seven ounces of gold. 'If you do not find them, this yogin lives in that region so do not ask anyone else' means if you do not understand, the gold is in the yogin's cloak so do not look elsewhere."

The lama said, "They say you women are canny, and it is true!" He was greatly amused.

Afterward, I gave one-tenth of an ounce of gold to the yogin, which pleased him.[9] I offered seven-tenths of an ounce of gold to the lady. Then I offered three ounces of gold to the lama and said to him, "Now, my old mother says that she needs a hailstorm. So please think kindly of me and give me the instructions for casting hail."

He replied, "If you need hail, go see Yungtön Trogyal." The lama gave me a letter together with some gifts, and once again I went to the village of Kyorpo in Yarlung.

I met the lama and presented him with an offering of three ounces of gold, as well as lama Yönten Gyatso's letter and gifts. I described how I needed to cast hailstorms and he asked, "Was your black magic successful?"

"The magic was successful," I replied. "Thirty-five people perished. Now, in addition, I received a letter saying that I need to cast hailstorms, so please think kindly of me."

"So be it," said the lama. He gave me the instructions and I went to practice them in my old retreat cell. After seven days, a cloud gathered inside the magical pit, lightning flashed, and thunder rumbled. Thus I thought I could direct a hailstorm by pointing my finger.

The lama repeatedly asked me, "Since you are casting a hailstorm, how high are the crops now in your region?"

I replied first, "They have just barely sprouted," and then some time later, "The seedlings are just high enough to hide the pigeons."

"It is a little too early," said the lama. Later he asked again, "Now how high are they?"

"The ears of grain are just beginning to come out," I replied.

"In that case, it is time to go cast the hailstorm," said the lama. He sent the messenger who had already been to my village as my companion, and disguised as yogins we set off. In my region the elders could not remember having had such a good year, and a law was established forbidding people from harvesting the crops whenever they pleased. When we arrived, the harvest was due to be reaped the next day and the day after. I prepared for the practice in the upper end of the valley. Then I repeated the mantras and a cloud gathered, barely the size of a small bird. This was not what I had hoped for. So I invoked the names of the oath-bound protectors and proclaimed the truth of how my countrymen had abused me. I pounded my cloak and shed many tears. Then suddenly a black cloud, unimaginably vast, gathered in the sky. It converged into a single mass and at that instant hailstones beat down upon the grain, covering the entire valley three bricks deep. The whole mountainside was washed into ravines. Seeing the loss of their harvest, the villagers wept. Afterward, a tremendous rainstorm set in. As my companion and I were chilled, we lit a fire of tamarisk wood in a cave whose entrance faced north, and there we stayed.

Some locals, who had gone hunting for the harvest thanksgiving, said, "This Töpaga has wreaked suffering upon our countrymen as no one else ever has. He has already slain so many men. Now he has wiped out this year's excellent crops. If he fell into our hands, we would rip out his still-beating heart, and each of us would take a bit of flesh and a drop of blood. But even this would not relieve the pain we feel in our hearts." As they were saying this, they passed in front of our cave on their way down the mountain. An old man said, "Silence! Silence! Speak softly. There is smoke in that cave over there and we don't know who it is."

The younger men said, "It must be Töpaga. He hasn't seen us so we should call together a gang from the village. If we don't kill him, he will bring still further ruin to the region." With this, they turned back.

My companion said, "You go on ahead. I'll pretend that I

am you and that I have come to gloat over their misfortune." We agreed to meet at the inn of Dingri on the fourth night. He was conscious of his own great strength and remained there without fear. At that moment I dreamed of seeing my mother one more time, but frightened by my enemies, I quickly fled. As I skirted the village of Nyanam, a dog bit my leg and I did not arrive at our meeting place on time.

My companion was surrounded by the gang of villagers but broke through their circle and escaped. He raced when they were at his heels. When they lagged behind he slowed down. They flung weapons at him and each time he hurled large stones in return. As he ran away, he shouted at them, "I will curse anyone who ventures against me. Did I not gloat over all the men I have already slain? I wiped out this year's excellent crops. Shall I not gloat over that too? So if you do not treat my mother and sister well, I will curse the highlands of this valley and annihilate its lowlands. Those who are not killed will have their family lines severed for nine generations. If you do not see this region laid waste with death and destruction, it will be no fault of mine. Just wait! Just wait!"

Frightened at this, the men of the gang quarreled among themselves, saying, "Do something back! Do something!" With that, they agreed they should return.

My companion reached Dingri ahead of me and asked the innkeeper if a yogin such as himself had arrived. The innkeeper replied, "He has not, but you so-called yogins are very fond of drink. There is a drinking festival over in the next village. Go there. If you have no cup, I can lend you one." The yogin borrowed a cup, deep-bottomed and ashen like the face of Shinjé, the Lord of Death, and carried it to the festival grounds where I was seated at the end of a row of guests. He came up beside me and asked, "Why didn't you meet me yesterday?"

"Yesterday I went to beg and a dog bit my leg so I couldn't travel quickly. But it's nothing to worry about."

We set out together and when we reached Kyorpo in Yarlung the lama said, "You two have indeed met with great success."

"No one has been here before us. Who did you hear it from?" we asked.

"The faces of the oath-bound protectors appeared, their faces shining like the full moon. I have also presented them the thanksgiving rites." The lama seemed very pleased as he said this.

This is the way I accumulated negative karma by plotting to destroy my enemies. Thus Milarepa spoke.

This was the third ordinary deed, the deed in which he annihilated his enemies. These three chapters constitute Milarepa's ordinary worldly deeds.

PART II

CHAPTER FOUR

Part two consists of Milarepa's nine supreme deeds leading to transcendence and peace. The first deed: on account of his world-weariness and renunciation, he sought out a qualified lama. The second deed: he met his lama and, submitting to his every command, purified evil deeds and obscurations, excluding none, through insufferable and exhausting hardships. The third deed: he was accepted by his lama with affection and received the ripening and liberating instructions. The fourth deed: meditating on reality in the lama's presence, the sprouts of experience and realization emerged. The fifth deed: he mastered the general instructions and then, compelled by symbolic acts within a dream, he obtained tantric instructions and departed from the lama. The sixth deed: he vowed to practice having been reminded once again of the essencelessness of life's round. The seventh deed: in order to practice the lama's teachings, he renounced his present life and meditated undistracted in the mountains with perseverance and through severe austerity. The eighth deed: meditating in that manner, his experience and realization were perfected, and through the results of his practice he benefited both the teachings and sentient beings. The ninth deed: he completed the activities of an enlightened being and, in order to compel beings to practice dharma, he dissolved his form body into the sphere of reality. Here is the first of these.

Once again Rechungpa asked, "Revered lama, you said that you performed virtuous actions, which must refer to those of authentic dharma. What were the circumstances through which the Jetsün encountered the dharma?"

The Jetsün replied:

I felt remorse for the evils I had committed through casting black magic and hailstorms. I thought about dharma so intensely that during the day I forgot to eat. If I went out, I wanted to stay in. If I stayed in, I wanted to go out. At night I was so filled with world-weariness and renunciation that I was unable to sleep. Yet I could not confess my desire to seek out the dharma. While I continued to serve the lama, I constantly agonized about how I might practice dharma. At that time, the lama had a faithful and devoted patron who amassed great wealth and so was able to provide whatever was needed. This patron was stricken with a terrible illness, and the lama was the first to be called upon to look after him. Three days passed and the lama returned, his face dark and sullen.

"Venerable lama, why do you seem so uneasy?" I asked.

He replied, "All composite things are impermanent. Last night my fine patron died, so I am saddened by life's round. More importantly, I am an old man and from the white teeth of my youth to the white hair of my old age I have focused my actions on destruction through black magic, curses, and hailstorms. Son, from a young age you too have accumulated terrible evil deeds by casting magic and hailstorms. All those will come to weigh upon me as well."

"Has the lama not led those beings to higher rebirth and liberation?" I asked.

The lama replied, "I understand that the nature of beings is reality itself and I know in theory how to lead them to higher rebirth and liberation. I also know a ritual or two for doing that, but I have only words and rote knowledge, so when the time comes to perform them I have no confidence that they will work. Now I am going to practice dharma so I can endure whatever difficulties arise. You stay here to look after my disciples and I will take up the path for your higher rebirth and liberation. Or else, you practice dharma and take up the path for my higher rebirth and liberation. I will provide you with the necessary provisions."

In this way, my wish was fulfilled and I requested permission to practice dharma myself.

"In that case," said the lama, "since you are young and show great perseverance and faith, you must practice perfectly pure dharma."

He gave me a crossbred yak together with a load of woolen cloth from Yarlung. Then he said, "In the place called Nar in Tsangrong lives lama Rongtön Lhaga who has become a scholar and adept of the authentic dharma called Great Perfection. Go there and practice in a genuine way."

In accordance with the lama's prophetic advice, I went to Nar in Tsangrong and made inquiries. The lama's wife and several monks in residence said, "This is the main monastery and the lama isn't here at present. He is staying at a branch monastery in the place called Nyangtö Rinang."

"Well, in that case," I replied, "I was sent here by lama Yungtön Trogyal, so please help me meet with your master." Then I told them my story at length and the lama's wife dispatched a monk as my guide.

Finally, I met the lama at Nyangtö Rinang. I presented him offerings of the woolen cloth and the crossbred yak. I then told him I was a terrible sinner who had come from Nyima Latö, and requested a dharma teaching that brings about liberation in this lifetime.

The lama replied, "This authentic dharma of mine, the Great Perfection, is victorious in the spreading of its roots, victorious in the achievement of its canopy, and victorious in the fruit it bears. Meditate by day and become a buddha by day. Meditate by night and become a buddha by night. Fortunate beings whose past actions have created favorable circumstances do not even need to meditate, they are liberated by simply hearing it. Since it is a dharma teaching for those with superior faculties, I shall grant it."

The lama gave the initiations and instructions, and I thought, "When I first practiced magic, substantial signs of success appeared in fourteen days. Seven days were enough for hail. Now here is a teaching even easier than magic or hail. Meditating by day, you become a buddha by day. Meditating by night, you become a buddha by night. And if you are a fortunate person whose past actions have created favorable circumstances, you

don't even need to meditate. To encounter such a tradition, I too must be one of those people with favorable circumstances." Filled with pride in this way, I stayed in bed without meditating, and in this way the man and the teaching parted ways.

When several days had passed the lama said, "It is true what you said, you are a great sinner who has come from Latö. I have boasted about my teaching a little too much, and so I have not been able to guide you. Now, in the remote hermitage called Drowolung in Lhodrak there lives a direct disciple of the great Indian adept Nāropa. He is a supreme master, the king of translators named Marpa Lotsawa, an adept of the New Mantra Tradition without rival throughout the three realms. Since you have a karmic link with him from previous lives, go see him."

Simply hearing the name of Marpa the Translator I was filled with an indescribable happiness, every hair on my body quivered with joy, and I sobbed with boundless devotion. I focused my mind one-pointedly and set out carrying provisions and a volume of scripture. As I went along I thought, "When, O when will I meet the lama and see his face?" and I was not hampered by any other considerations.

The night before my arrival in Drowolung, Paṇchen Nāropa appeared to Marpa in a dream and granted initiation. To Marpa he gave a slightly soiled five-pronged vajra made from lapis lazuli and a golden vase filled with nectar. Then he said, "Using water from the vase, cleanse the tarnish from this vajra and then mount it atop a victory banner. This will please the Victors of the past and make sentient beings happy, thus benefiting yourself and others." With this, Nāropa vanished into space.

In accordance with the lama's instructions, he washed the vajra with water from the vase and then mounted it atop a victory banner. Light from the vajra permeated the entire universe. As this light struck beings throughout the six realms, they were filled with a happiness devoid of suffering. In such a state they bowed down before Marpa and the victory banner and presented them offerings. The Victors then consecrated the banner.

Marpa awoke from the dream with a slight feeling of pride. He was delighted and joyful, and at that moment his wife en-

tered to serve his morning meal. She said, "O lama, last night I dreamt that two women, who said they were from Oḍḍiyāna in the north, appeared carrying a crystal stupa, slightly soiled on the outside. They said, 'It is lama Nāropa's command to master Marpa that the master consecrate this stupa and place it on the summit of a mountain.' You, master, replied, 'Paṇchen Nāropa has already consecrated this stupa, but I must obey his command.' You then performed extensive consecration rites, washing the stupa with water from the vase and so forth. You then placed it on a mountaintop where it radiated light as dazzling as the sun and moon and replicated numerous copies of itself on the tops of neighboring mountains. The two women served as stewards for them all. Such was my dream. What does it mean?"

Although Marpa thought that these dreams were in accord and was elated, he said to his wife, "Since dreams come out of nowhere I do not know their meaning. I am going to plow the field along the path down there. Prepare what I need."

"But you have so many laborers," she replied. "If you, a great lama, undertake such work, everyone will ridicule us. So I beg you, stay at home."

The lama ignored her words, demanding, "Bring me plenty of beer." When she brought him a full jar of beer he said, "I will drink this. Bring more beer for a guest." She brought another full jar of beer, which he buried in the ground and covered with his hat. While he plowed he drank the beer and waited.

Meanwhile, beginning in the lower end of Lhodrak I asked everyone I met where the most excellent Marpa Lotsawa lived, but I did not come upon a single person who knew of him. When I reached the pass from which I could see Drowolung, a man appeared and I questioned him as I had the others. "There is a man named Marpa, but no one called the most excellent Marpa Lotsawa," he replied.

"Well then, where is Drowolung?" I asked.

"Drowolung is over there," he said, pointing it out.

"Who lives over there?"

"That very man named Marpa."

"And he has no other name?"

"Some also call him lama Marpa."

Concluding that this was the lama's residence, I asked, "What is this pass called?"

"The pass is called Chölagang (Pass of Dharma)."

I joyfully thought that to see my lama's residence from the Pass of Dharma was a very auspicious omen. Then I pressed on, continuing my inquiries. I came upon a number of cowherds and I asked them. The elder ones said they did not know of him, but one—a handsome youth wearing fine ornaments, well spoken, and his hair oiled and neatly combed—replied, "Do you speak of my father? If so, my father bought gold with all our wealth and took it to India. He returned carrying many gem-studded volumes of scripture as gifts. He never worked in the past, but today father is plowing his field."

I considered this and thought, "It sounds like him, but such a great translator would not likely be plowing his field." And I continued on my way. Along the road a heavyset cleric with a stocky frame, wide-set eyes, and a resplendent air was plowing a field. The instant I saw him I was overcome with a feeling of inconceivable and inexpressible happiness in which the flickering perceptions of this life suddenly came to a halt. I remained there for a moment and then said, "It is said that the translator Marpa Lotsawa, a direct disciple of glorious Nāropa, dwells in this area. Where does he live?"

For a long while, the cleric looked me over from head to toe. Then he asked, "Where are you from? What is your business?"

I replied, "I am a terrible sinner from the region of Latö in Tsang. Since he is so greatly renowned, I have come to request the genuine dharma."

"Very well then," he said. "I will introduce you to Marpa. But meanwhile, plow this field of mine." From under his hat he took out the beer he had buried in the ground and gave it to me. It was refreshing and delicious. The cleric went off saying I should work hard to plow the field. I drank the remaining beer and then plowed with determination.

After a while, the youth I had spoken with among the cow-

herds came to call me. "The lama says that you should come home to meet him," he reported, and I was overjoyed.

"The cleric has arranged an introduction for me," I replied, "so I will plow the remainder of his field." Thus I turned over the little bit of ground that remained. Since that field served as the favorable circumstance for me to meet the lama, I called it Tünkyen (Favorable Circumstance). In summer, a footpath runs along its edge, but it runs through the middle in winter.

I joined the youth and went to the lama's home. The cleric I had met previously sat upon a carpet, raised high with two cushions and a woolen rug, and a pillow at his back. He had wiped himself off, but his brow, his nostrils, his moustache, and his goatee had not come clean. He sat there in a relaxed manner, waiting for his meal. I thought, "This is the same man as before. Where is the lama seated?" and I looked about.

The lama said, "It is true that you really do not know who I am. I am Marpa. Prostrate yourself!"

I bowed down and, touching his feet to my head, I said, "Precious lama, I am a great sinner from Nyima Latö. I offer my body, speech, and mind, and I humbly request food, clothing, and dharma. Please look upon me with kindness so that I may attain buddhahood in this lifetime."

The lama replied, "Don't go on bragging to me that you are a great sinner. You were not driven to commit sins on my behalf. What evil deeds have you done?"

I described my circumstances at length and he said, "So be it. In any case, it is good that you offered your body, speech, and mind. But you will not get food and clothing in addition to dharma. Either I will give you food and clothing and you will need to seek dharma from someone else, or I will give you dharma and you will seek food and clothing elsewhere. Choose between these two, but if you choose that I should give you dharma, whether or not you attain buddhahood in this life will depend on your own perseverance."

"In that case," I replied, "since I came to the lama to receive dharma, I shall seek food and clothing elsewhere."

As I was carrying my volume of scripture into the shrine

room, he said, "Take your filthy book away. It would defile the sacred objects of my shrine."

It occurred to me that he responded this way because my text contained works of black magic. I kept it in my own quarters and I remained there for several days during which time the lama's wife offered me enjoyable food.

Thus Milarepa spoke.

This was the first of the supreme deeds, the deed of his meeting the lama.

CHAPTER FIVE

At that point, I went begging high and low throughout the Lhodrak valley. I thereby gained twenty-one *khal* loads of barley measured in the full *dré* vessels of Lhodrak.[10] With fourteen, I purchased a copper kettle with four handles, free of rust and grime inside and out. I used one load to buy meat and beer, and poured the remaining six loads into a large sack. I then placed the kettle on top of the sack and carried them back to the lama's residence. Exhausted when I arrived, I dropped the load to the floor, which caused the room to tremble. The lama, who was eating his meal, jumped up and said, "You're an energetic young tyro. Do you also intend to murder us by bringing down the house with your brute strength? You're altogether unfit, so get rid of your barley." And he pushed it away with his foot so that I was forced to take it outside for a while. Without thinking badly of him, I simply said to myself, "It seems that the lama has a fierce temper. I must watch how I behave and render service when in his presence."

Then as an offering I presented the empty copper kettle and bowed down. He held the kettle in his hands and for a while stood there pensive, his eyes half-shut. At last, tears trickled down his face and he said, "This is most auspicious. I offer it to Paṇchen Nāro." He raised the kettle in his hands, sounded the handles, and struck it with a switch, ringing it as loudly as he could. He then carried it in to his shrine room where he filled it with melted butter from the butter lamps and set it down. At that moment, I was overcome with revulsion for the world and stricken by an intense longing for dharma. I repeatedly begged the lama to impart the dharma and his oral instructions.

The lama replied, "I have a great many faithful disciples coming from Ü and Tsang. The inhabitants of Yamdrok Taklung and Ling attack them, stealing their provisions and offerings with impunity. Cast hailstorms upon these two regions. This, too, will be religious work and I shall then grant you the oral instructions."

I cast terrible hailstorms upon those two regions. Then I requested the oral instructions.

"Was it for these meager bits of hail you cast that I brought back the dharma from India with such difficulty? If you need dharma no matter the cost: the highlanders of Lhodrak have attacked my disciples coming from Nyal Loro and they also show great contempt for me. You, who claim to possess great magic, cast black magic upon these men. When signs of its success appear, I shall grant you the oral instructions of Paṇchen Nāro that I possess, which bring about awakening in one life and one body."

I cast magic and the highlanders fought among themselves. Many belligerent men perished at the point of a sword. Seeing this the lama said, "It is true you possess great magic, just as you claimed," and so he gave me the name Great Magician.

Then I requested the oral instructions on awakening for attaining buddhahood. "Hah!" he replied. "Was it to reward the evil deeds you committed that I went to India without regard for my life, that I offered gold without concern for my wealth, and thereby was able to request the oral teachings that are the living breath of the *ḍākinīs*? You say you need them—that must be a joke, and a feeble one at that. This makes me laugh! If I were anyone else, I would kill you! Now restore the harvest of the Yamdrok people and heal all of the highlanders. If you do that, I shall grant the oral instructions. Otherwise, don't come see me again." Thus he scolded me, nearly hurling blows.

The lama's wife consoled me as I fell into deep despair and shed many tears. The next day, the lama came and said, "Last night I was quite hard on you, but do not be disheartened. Do not be impatient, for I give the oral instructions slowly. You are hardworking, so help build a tower for me to present to my son Darma Dodé. When you are finished, I will grant you the

oral instructions and also provide you with clothing and provisions."

"What will happen to me if I die before then without the dharma?" I asked.

"I will see to it that you do not die before then," he replied. "I do not possess dharma instructions empty of promise. Since you show tremendous perseverance, if you can meditate on my oral instructions, you will demonstrate whether or not you can become a buddha in this life. My lineage possesses a transmission of blessings unlike any other."

After the lama gave this comforting advice, my mind was set at ease. "In that case," I said, "please draw up plans for the tower."

All the lama's paternal relatives had sworn an oath preventing them from constructing fortifications in strategic locations. But Marpa had not taken the oath. So now he had the means both for deceiving them about his intention to construct a tower there and for purifying my negative deeds. Standing on an eastern spur of the mountain he said, "Build a tower like so," and I began building a round tower. When I was about halfway finished, the lama came and said, "I didn't consider things earlier. Tear down this tower to its foundations and carry the earth and stones back to the places you found them." And so I did.

Then, on a western spur of the mountain, the lama acted as if he were drunk on beer and said, "Now, build a tower like so," and I began building a semicircular tower. Again, when I was about halfway finished, the lama came and said, "This also will not do. Here too, carry the earth and stones back to the places you found them." And so I did.

We then went to a northern spur of the mountain and the lama said, "My dear Great Magician, the other day I was drunk and did not give proper instructions. Now, build a fine tower right here."

I replied, "Building towers and then tearing them down is nothing but toil for me and a waste of your resources. Please consider this carefully."

"This time, I am not drunk. I have considered the matter

carefully. This will be called the 'mantrika's tower' and should be triangular, so build it in that shape. You will not need to tear this one down."

I began building a triangular tower. When I had finished about one-third of the construction, the lama arrived. "Great Magician, whose tower are you building? Who gave you instructions?" he demanded.

"Surely the lama himself ordered the tower for his son," I replied.

He said, "I don't recall giving any such instructions. If what you say is indeed true, I must be either absentminded or completely crazy."

"At the time," I reminded him, "I feared something like this might happen and I requested that you carefully consider the matter. You said that you had considered it carefully, and that this time I wouldn't need to tear it down. I clearly remember this."

"Well then," the lama replied, "who is your witness of this? Did you intend to lock me up here in this tower, which looks like a triangular magic dungeon, and cast your spells? I have neither plundered your estate nor squandered your patrimony. If that is not the case and you indeed desire dharma, then, since the local guardians are displeased, carry the tower's earth and stones back to the places you found them. Then if you want the dharma, I shall grant it. If you won't do it, then leave." Speaking in this way, he worked himself into a rage.

I was overcome by deep depression but still yearned for dharma. So in accordance with the lama's instructions, for the triangular tower as well, I carried the earth and stones back to the places I found them. Meanwhile, a sore appeared on my back. I thought, "If I show it to the lama, he will only scold me. If I show it to the lady, it will look like I'm complaining about my work." I kept the sore to myself and wept. Then I called upon the lady to help me request the dharma. She went before the lama and said, "I know now that you are insufferable since you have assigned such pointless work on these towers. Be compassionate and grant Great Magician the dharma."

He replied, "Prepare a good meal and then bring him to me."

Carrying the meal with her, the lady brought me before the lama. "Great Magician," he said, "do not accuse me, as you did yesterday, of a deception I did not commit. If you want the dharma, I shall grant it." He gave me the transmission and vows of ordinary refuge. He added, "That is all called ordinary dharma. If you wish for the extraordinary oral instructions of Secret Mantra, you must act in this way." Then he narrated a brief account of Nāropa's life and his practice of austerities, concluding, "It will be difficult for you to live up to such an example."

This engendered a powerful faith that moved me to tears, and I resolved to do whatever the lama commanded.

Several days passed and the lama asked that I attend him during a walk, which I did. We reached the land protected by the lama's paternal relatives. He said, "Now, in this place you shall build a square tower, pale gray in color, nine stories tall, with a spire reaching the tenth story. It will never be torn down. When it is finished, I will give you the oral instructions. You may then enter meditation retreat and I will supply your provisions."

"In that case," I replied, "might the lady be present as a witness to these promises?"

"Very well," said the lama. He then drew an outline for the foundation and I invited the lama's wife. In the presence of both lama and lady I said, "I have already built three towers and I have torn them down. The first time, the lama said he had not considered the matter. The second time, he said he was drunk. The third time, he asked if he were absentminded or completely crazy. When I reminded him of the instructions he had given me, he asked who was my witness and then scolded me at length. This time I have invited the lady as a witness to these promises, so please attest to them."

The lady replied, "It is fine for me to serve as witness, but the lama is a strong-willed judge and will not likely consider my testimony. To start with, the lama is building towers without reason and tearing them down without reason. More to the point, this land is not ours alone. It has been pledged to all our relatives and will so become a source of infighting. Even if I plead, the lama will not listen to me."

The lama said to his wife, "You shall serve as a witness. I will act as I have promised. I will not have you raise objections to serving in this way. Now go."

Then I laid the foundation for a square tower. While I was building the walls, Ngoktön Chödor of Zhung, Tsurtön Wangé of Dol, and Metön Tsönpo of Tsangron playfully rolled a boulder into place as a foundation stone. When I had reached the second story beside the main door, Marpa arrived. He looked everything over and was pleased. Then, pointing a finger at the stone that had been rolled into place by his three senior disciples, he asked, "Great Magician, where did this stone come from?"

I replied, "Your three senior heart-son disciples playfully brought it here."

"In that case, their stone is not an appropriate addition to your work on the tower. Remove the stone and carry it back to the place it came from."

"But you promised that this tower would not be torn down," I replied.

"That is so. But it is not fitting that my disciples, who are practicing the two stages of yoga, be pressed into service as your servants. Don't tear down the entire structure, but remove the stone and return it to the place it came from."

So I tore down the tower from the top down and returned the stone to its place. "Now," the lama said, "once again fetch the boulder and set it down as a foundation stone."

Lifting it up I had to exert as much strength alone as all three of them together, but I returned it as it was before without much difficulty. It became known as my strongman stone.

While I was laying the foundation on the mountain spur, the paternal relatives all held council and said, "Marpa is building fortifications on the oath-bound mountain, so we must defend our land." Some said, "Marpa has gone crazy and has a very strong novice from Latö building towers on every outcropping and mountain spur without a plan. When they are half finished, he is being forced to tear them down and to return the earth and stones to the places he found them. He will tear this

one down too. If he does not, we are right to defend our land. Let us watch if he tears it down or not."

I did not tear it down, but worked on the tower continuously. By the time I reached the seventh story, a sore had appeared on my waist. The paternal relatives then said, "Now, he is not going to tear it down. The first ones he demolished were a cover for building this one. We will destroy it ourselves." With this, they prepared their forces. Just then, the lama conjured miraculous emanations filling the tower inside and out with a band of armor-clad soldiers. The relations said, "Where did Marpa Lotsawa find so many soldiers?" They were all terrified and, unable to attack, each came forth in private to pay his respects and beg for pardon. Thus they all became his patrons and submitted to his local rule.

At that time, Metön Tsönpo of Tsangron came to request the great initiation of Cakrasaṃvara. The lama's wife said, "This time, you should try by all means to obtain initiation."

I thought, "So far, I have built the tower without help carrying so much as a stone the size of a goat head, a basketful of earth, a single bucket of water, or a spadeful of mud. So now he will grant me initiation." I offered prostrations and then sat down in line for the initiation.

"Great Magician, what do you have for the initiation fee?" asked the lama.

I replied, "I have the lama's word that he would grant initiation and oral instructions when I completed my service of building his son's tower. That's why I am seated here so he may grant them."

The lama said, "I did not acquire the initiations and oral in structions from India with such difficulty in order for you to make a little tower no bigger than my forearm. If you have something for the initiation fee, bring it. Otherwise, don't sit in line with those about to receive the initiation of profound Secret Mantra." He slapped me, grabbed me by the hair, and threw me out.

At that moment I wanted to die. I sat crying the entire night. The lama's wife then appeared and said, "The lama declares,

'The dharma teachings I carried back from India were brought for the benefit of beings.' Were even a dog to appear before him, he would teach it dharma and then dedicate the merit of having done so. I don't know why he won't accept you. But in any case, don't form wrong ideas about him."

In the morning, the lama came and said, "Great Magician, from today on stop your work on the tower. Instead, build a covered walk at its base with twelve pillars and an inner sanctuary. When they're done, I will give you initiation and oral instructions."

With that I laid the foundations for a covered walk and began construction. All the while, the lama's wife provided me with well-seasoned food and enough beer to keep me slightly drunk. Like that she comforted me and showed me great affection.

As the covered walk neared completion, Tsurtön Wangé of Dol came to request the great Guhyasamāja initiation. The lama's wife said, "Now son, you should by all means receive the initiation." She gave me a ball of butter wrapped in leather, a bolt of woolen cloth, and a small copper kettle. I presented them as offerings and then sat down in line for the initiation.

The lama said, "Great Magician, what do you have for the initiation fee that allows you to sit in line?"

"A ball of butter, a bolt of woolen cloth, and a small copper kettle," I replied.

The lama said, "Those things were already given to me by other patrons. You may not use my own possessions as your initiation fee. If you have something of your own, bring it. Otherwise, do not linger in line for my initiation." He stood up and, rebuking me at length, kicked me and threw me outside. I wanted to sink into the earth. I thought, "I killed many people casting black magic and destroyed many crops sending hail. Could this be the karmic ripening of those deeds? Does the lama know I will never be fit for the dharma? Is it because he has so little compassion for me that he does not teach me? Whatever the reason, what's the use of a human body without the dharma, which only collects misdeeds? Should I kill myself? Should I kill myself?"

At that moment, the lama's wife brought me a portion of the

consecrated food offerings. She consoled me for a long time and then left. I had no appetite for the offerings and spent the entire night weeping. In the morning the lama came and said, "Now, finish raising the covered walk and the tower and then I will give you initiation and the oral instructions."

I resumed work on the tower and was nearing completion of the walk when another sore appeared on the small of my back. My back festered with sores while pus and blood oozed from the three wounds. Showing them to the lama's wife, I reminded her of the promises made when I laid the foundations for the square tower. I begged her to think of the dharma and to help me request the teachings. She took a good look and broke down in tears, crying, "I will speak to the lama."

She went to the lama and said, "Precious lama, all this work Great Magician is doing on the tower has covered him with open wounds. Three have formed on his back, oozing incredible amounts of blood and pus. In the past I have heard of and even seen such wounds appear on the backs of horses and donkeys, but I have never seen or even heard of them appearing on the back of a man. It would be shameful if others were to see or hear about such a thing. It is disgraceful that this was caused by a great lama such as yourself. Since he is so pitiful, please give this child the dharma. You did say at the outset that you would give the dharma when the tower was finished."

"That is just what I said," replied the lama. "When the tower is ten stories high I will teach the dharma. But where are the ten stories?"

"He has built a covered walk that exceeds ten stories in scope."

"'Much talk, no work,' it is said. I will give him dharma when the ten stories are complete. Does he really have a sore?"

In anguish, the lady replied, "Your power has blinded you to the truth. Not only does he have a sore, his back is festering with sores." And she hurried away. "Well then," called out the lama, "send him up."

So I went, wondering if he would grant the dharma. The lama said, "Great Magician, show me your sores." I revealed them and he looked carefully. At last, the lama said, "My lord

Nāropa underwent twelve great trials and twelve minor trials, twenty-four different trials meted out upon his own body, all of which surpass yours. As for me, I served Nāropa without regard for my life or my wealth. Therefore, if you yearn for the dharma, continue to work on the tower without bragging about your own activities."

"He is right," I thought. From my clothing, he fashioned a pad for my sores and said, "I also do this for horses and donkeys, so use the pad for your wounds and continue to carry the earth and stones."

I replied, "What use is a pad for wounds when my entire back is festering with sores?"

"It will help to keep out the dirt," he said.

Thinking this was the lama's command, I carried earth in a vessel in front of me and mixed the mud plaster. Seeing me, the lama thought, "A person who carries out whatever the lama commands is most extraordinary," and he secretly shed tears.

My sores worsened and I fell ill. I sent for the lama's wife and asked that I be given the dharma, or at least be allowed to rest until the sores healed. She presented this to the lama, who replied, "He shall not receive the dharma until the tower is finished. If he has strength to work, he should do what he can. If he doesn't, let him rest."

The lady said to me, "Rest without working until your sores have healed." While I rested she provided me with food, which fortified me, and for a few days I was happy except for concerns that I had not obtained the dharma.

When my sores had mostly healed, the lama, making no mention of the dharma, said, "Great Magician, it is time to resume work on the tower." As I was preparing to do so, the lama's wife said, "Let's make a plan for you to obtain the dharma." We talked it over. Then, placing my book and a few religious items atop a small sack of flour, I went to a spot where the lama would see me. To the lady I said, "Please help send me off," and I pretended to leave. The lama's wife called out, "I shall ask the lama and surely now you will receive the dharma. Whatever happens, you must stay." And she pretended to keep me from going.

Witnessing this, the lama said, "Dakmema, what are you two doing?"

She replied, "Great Magician once came from a distant land to see the lama and devote himself to dharma, yet when he arrived he was not granted the teachings. Instead, he received only scolding and abuse. He fears he will die without the dharma, so he is taking his belongings and says he is going in search of another lama. I agreed to help him secure the dharma from you and am trying to keep him from leaving."

"I see," said the lama and, stepping out, he repeatedly slapped my face. "You already offered me your body, speech, and mind right when you first came to see me. Where do you think you're going now? Surely you aren't leaving. I am master of your body, speech, and mind, and in fact I could cut them into a hundred pieces. If you're leaving in spite of that, tell me why you are carrying flour from my house." He threw me down and beat me. Then he went inside carrying the sack of flour.

My despair had no end, like that of a mother who has lost her only son. I consulted with the lama's wife and, unable to bear the lama's overwhelming presence, I retreated inside where I sat weeping. She said, "Try what you may, the lama will not grant you the dharma. But by autumn's end, he surely will. Until then, I will do so."

She gave me the meditation method of Vajravārāhī. It brought about no inner experience but it helped my mind a great deal and lifted my spirits. I thought I should repay the lady's kindness, and that she could purify negative deeds since she was the lama's wife. I rendered her service while she performed her summer chores, standing by her stool when she milked the cows and by her pan when she roasted barley on the hearth. I felt at that time that I must seek another lama. But thinking it over carefully, I was convinced that no other lama but this one had the oral instructions for attaining buddhahood in one life and one body. I thought, "Even if I don't attain buddhahood right now, at least I have ceased accumulating karma for rebirth in the lower realms later on. When I have suffered trials for the sake of the dharma as did Nāropa, the lama will be

pleased and I will obtain the oral instructions. Then I will meditate on them and achieve buddhahood in this life." So once again I carried earth and stones and resumed the mud plasterwork for the covered walk and sanctuary.

At that time, Ngoktön Chödor of Zhung and his retinue arrived carrying many offerings in order to request the great initiation of Hevajra. The lama's wife said to me, "If the service you have rendered so far through your work on the tower is not enough, and the lama is interested only in wealth, then this time present an offering and you shall receive the initiation. First offer him this and then make your request. If he does not grant it, then I shall appeal on your behalf." She gave me a beautiful turquoise, large and reddish, that she kept as a private possession. I offered it to the lama and said, "This time, you must please grant me initiation." Then I sat down in line for the initiation.

The lama examined the turquoise, turning it around. "Where did you get this, Great Magician?" he asked.

"The lama's wife gave it to me," I replied.

"Call Dakmema here," he said, smiling. I requested the lady to come.

The lama asked her, "Dakmema, where did we get this turquoise?"

The lama's wife offered many prostrations. Then she said, "This turquoise has never been the master's property. When my parents first sent me to the lama he went into a rage. My parents told me, 'Tuck this away without showing anyone. If you and your husband should separate you will need it.' They gave it to me as my own private property and, with an overwhelming feeling of intense compassion, I have given it to this child. I beg the father to accept it. Look upon Great Magician with kindness and grant him initiation. In the past he has been thrown out from the initiation line, causing him great despair. So this time, lama Ngok and assembled disciples, please help present my request." Saying this, she offered many prostrations.

Cowed by the lama's ferocious temperament, Ngok and his followers were unable to submit another request. They said only, "It is so," and offered prostrations, as did the lady.

The lama said, "Through Dakmema's scheming a fine turquoise almost fell into a stranger's hands." He tied the turquoise around his neck and continued, "You haven't thought carefully, Dakmema. If I am wholly your master, I am surely master of the turquoise. Great Magician, if you have wealth, bring it here and take the initiation. The turquoise is mine."

I lingered, wondering if the lady might renew her request in the fervor of offering the turquoise. But the lama turned furious and sprang up saying, "What impudence! I sent you away but you did not go." He threw me facedown and everything went dark. Then he threw me on my back and I saw stars. Then he grabbed a staff, but Ngok held him back. Meanwhile, in terror I jumped through a window and escaped. Although the lama was actually concerned, he pretended to be angry. I was not harmed but was so distraught that I resolved to kill myself. Then the lama's wife came up to me in tears and said, "Great Magician, do not despair. Never has there been a disciple more beloved or dear than you. It is right for you to request dharma from another lama. I shall make preparations for you to meet with one and provide you with offerings and provisions for religious practice."

Thus she consoled me. Previously, the lady was required to take part in whatever religious feast offerings the lama performed, but that night she stayed with me as a companion in tears, weeping until daylight. In the morning, the lama called me before him. I went, wondering if he would grant the dharma. "Are you not dissatisfied that I would not grant you initiation yesterday? Is your opinion of me not shaken?" he asked.

"My faith in the lama has not been shaken," I replied. "I believed it was in response to the terrible sins and defilements of my past actions, and I was overcome with despair." I wept.

The lama said, "What do you hope to gain by putting on an exaggerated display of tears for me? Get out!"

Stepping out in a state of heartrending misery, I thought, "I had provisions and gifts when I carried out evil deeds. When I practice dharma I have no wealth at all. This is what has befallen me. If I had even half the gold I used when I practiced evil deeds, I would obtain initiation and oral instructions. Now,

without offerings, this lama will not grant instructions. Even if I went to another lama, I would not find one who did not require offerings. Without wealth, I will never get the dharma. A human body without dharma fosters evil deeds. I want to kill myself. What to do? What to do?

"I could earn wages serving a rich man and gain provisions and gifts to request the dharma. Or, since I have given up magic cast through wicked means, I could return home. My mother would be happy to see me and I might earn some money. In any case, whether I seek out the dharma or seek out wealth, I must leave."

I thought that taking the lama's flour would only incite his displeasure so, carrying my books, I left without telling even the lama's wife. Along the way I remembered the lady's kindness and was overcome with poignant memories. I reached a spot a half-day's journey from Drowolung and it was time to prepare my meal. I first begged some barley flour and then borrowed a cooking pot. I gathered water and wood, kindled a fire, cooked my meal, and ate it. Half a day had passed. I thought, "Half of the work I performed was service to the lama and half was payment for my food. Preparing just one meal this morning was hard work. But the lady every day performed the arduous task of cooking my meal and side dishes, and this morning I didn't even wish her well. I am an evil man." I thought I should perhaps go back, but could not bring myself to do so.

As I was returning the cooking pot, an old man said to me, "You seem like a young man, fit for work. Rather than beg, recite scriptures if you are able to read. Or if you cannot read, work as a servant and you will get both food and clothing. Do you know how to read?"

"I am not a beggar all the time, and I know how to read."

"That is excellent. In that case, recite scriptures in my home for a few days and I shall pay you."

I was overjoyed. I stayed at his house and read the *Perfection of Wisdom* in eight thousand lines. I read the life story of Taktungu, who, while penniless, was able to renounce life and

limb for the dharma. I thought, "He was certain to die if he gave up his heart, yet he was still resolved to sell it. Compared to him, I have barely suffered hardship at all for the dharma. It's possible that the lama will give the dharma. If he does not, the lady has promised to help me find another lama." Finding the courage to return, I headed back.

Meanwhile, when I had left the lama, his wife said to him, "The master's indomitable enemy has gone. Are you happy now?"

"Who has gone?" he asked.

She replied, "Wasn't it Great Magician whom the master treated with abuse, like a deadly enemy?"

His expression turned dour and a tear ran down his cheek. "Kagyu lamas, *ḍākinīs,* and dharma protectors," he called out, "turn around my fortunate son." Then, covering his head, he sat there quietly.

At that point, I came before the lama's wife and bowed down. Elated, she said, "You have done just the right thing. Now it seems the lama will grant you the dharma. When I said you had gone away he said, 'Turn around my fortunate son,' and broke down in tears. The lama's compassion seems to have drawn you back."

I thought, "The lady consoles me. If it were really true that the lama shed tears and called me fortunate, I would be gratified. But if he only said, 'Turn around,' then I am certainly not fortunate, as he has not granted me initiation or oral instructions. I have nowhere else to go. Must I be miserable here without obtaining the dharma?"

To the lama the lady said, "Great Magician has not forsaken us, he has returned. May he come bow down before you?"

The lama replied, "It's not that he has not forsaken us. He has not forsaken himself. But if you want to send him in then do so."

I went and bowed down. The lama said, "If you wish for the dharma from your heart with such restlessness and urgency, you must be willing to give even your life for it. Therefore, complete the remaining three stories of the tower and then I shall grant you the oral instructions. Otherwise, since it is a burden

to feed you and since you seem to have somewhere to go, then leave."

Unable to respond, I went outside. To the lama's wife I said, "I long to see my mother and the lama still will not grant me the dharma. If he would grant the dharma when I finish the remaining work on the tower, it would be worthwhile to stay. But what he does is incredible. It's just an excuse for him to avoid granting the dharma even after I finish working on the tower. Please let me go to my village. I pray for the master's and lady's good health." Offering prostrations, I took my book and prepared to leave.

The lama's wife said, "My son, you are right. As I already promised, I will find a way for you to obtain the dharma from Ngoktön, who is a senior disciple of the lama and possesses the oral instructions. Stay a little longer and pretend to work."

Gratified at this, I stayed and worked.

Paṇchen Nāropa had a custom of preparing an extensive feast offering of ritual cakes on the tenth day of the lunar month. Marpa therefore also prepared them on the tenth day of the moon. On one such occasion, the lama's wife prepared three large measures of beer each from one *khal* load of barley: one strong, one moderate, and one weak. Again and again the lady had the resident disciples bow before the lama and ply him with the strong first pouring of beer. The lady and I repeatedly filled the bowl. The resident disciples drank the moderate draft, while the lady only brought the weak beer to her lips and did not drink much. I did likewise and remained sober. The resident disciples, however, became drunk. As for the lama, with many people offering him strong beer, he became quite drunk and fell into a deep sleep.

Meanwhile the lady took the lama's seal, as well as Nāropa's six ornaments and rosary made of ruby, from his residence. She had a letter already prepared that was made to look like the lama's own written statement, and she affixed the seal on top of it. She then wrapped the articles in a fine cloth, sealed it with wax, and handed them to me, saying, "Act as if these were entrusted to you by the lama. Offer them to lama Ngokpa

and request the dharma." She sent me to Zhung, and I departed, placing my hopes in lama Ngokpa.

After two days had passed, the lama asked his wife, "What is Great Magician doing now?"

"He is on the road. I don't know anything more than that," she replied.

"Where has he gone?"

"He told me that although he had done so much work on the tower, you did not give him the dharma but only much scolding and abuse. Then he set off, saying he was now going to search for another lama. Although I might have warned the master, you took no interest. You would have showed no pity and only beat him more. So I said nothing. I did the best I could to stop him but he would not stay. He has gone."

The lama's expression turned grim. "When did he leave?" he asked.

"He left yesterday," replied the lady.

For a moment Marpa sat there in thought. Then he said, "My son has not yet gone far."

Meanwhile, I arrived at Riwo Kyungding in Zhung. Lama Ngokpa was explaining *The Two Divisions*[11] to his resident disciples. He had just reached the passage:

> I am the expounder and I am dharma.
> I am the disciple endowed with good qualities.
> I am the world teacher and the goal.
> I am the world and beyond the world.
> I am the nature of coemergent joy.

At that moment I made prostrations from a distance. The lama removed his hat, returned a greeting, and said, "This is the manner of homage used by disciples in the lineage of lama Marpa. The auspicious connection of his arrival at this juncture in the dharma talk is most excellent. He will become master of all the dharma. Go ask who he is."

One of the resident disciples came up to me and, recognizing me, asked, "Why have you come here?"

"Lama Marpa is very busy. Since I am the only one he hasn't had time to teach, I've come here to request the dharma. He has sent as his gifts Nāropa's ornaments and his ruby rosary."

The disciple went up to the lama and said, "It's Great Magician." Then he recounted my story. Overjoyed, the lama exclaimed, "Having Lord Nāropa's ornaments and rosary come to my home is as rare and as marvelous as the Udumbara flower.[12] We must greet them. We shall stop at this fine place in the teaching. Disciples, fetch parasols, victory banners, and musical instruments, and come quickly. We must salute the layman Great Magician."

I had remained at the place where I made prostrations, so a disciple came and informed me. I later called the place where I made prostrations Chaktsal Gang (Prostration Hill). I too saluted and at that moment a procession of disciples came to greet me carrying an incredible display of parasols, victory banners, and musical instruments.

We reached the lama's chambers. I offered prostrations and handed over the gifts. His eyes filled with tears and he held the gifts up to his head and received their blessings. Next he placed these excellent sacred objects on the shrine, giving them a place of central importance among very fine offerings. Then he read the letter aloud:

> To Ngok Chöku Dorjé: I am entering closed retreat and Great Magician is impatient. I am sending him to you to request the dharma, so grant him initiation and teach him the oral instructions. As tokens of my permission to do this I am sending Nāropa's ornaments and his rosary made of ruby.

Lama Ngokpa said, "Since this is the lama's command, I will certainly give you initiation and oral instructions. I had thought I should invite you so your arrival is a sign of the lama's compassion. Many disciples are coming to me from Kham, Dakpo, Kongpo, and Yarlung. Evil men from Yepo and Yemo in Dol steal their dharma provisions with impunity. Cast a hailstorm upon them. Then I will give you initiation and oral instructions."

I thought, "I am destined to perform evil deeds. If I cast a hailstorm, I will receive the genuine dharma but will also accrue the karma of such a heinous crime. If I don't cast one, it will amount to breaking the lama's command and I will not get the dharma. There is no way I can avoid casting a hailstorm."

I gathered the materials, taking with me ritual substances charged by mantras, and left for the countryside. There I set to work and hail began to fall. In Yepo, I lodged in the home of an old woman, taking shelter from the rain. Lightning flashed. Thunder clapped. A dark cloud gathered and one by one, then two by two, hailstones began to fall. Weeping, the old lady said, "What shall I eat when my crops are beaten down by hail?"

"Surely, I am committing an evil deed," I thought. Then I said, "Mistress, quickly draw the shape of your field."

"It is like this," she said, and she drew an elongated triangle. I performed a yogic gaze and covered the drawing with an iron pan. A tip of the triangle remained uncovered and that part of the field was devastated by fierce winds. I was certain about the hailstorm and I went to look. The central mountain slopes of the two regions were all swept into deep ravines. All the other fields were completely washed away. But the old woman's field was left standing fresh and unharmed except for the tip, which was struck by hail and then flattened by the rushing flood. In later times, hail never again fell upon that field, and it is said that the old woman did not need to pay hail tax[13] on the entire field but only on the tip that was destroyed by the flood.

Then I headed back. Along the way I met an old shepherd and his child whose cows and sheep had been carried away by the flood. To them I said, "I did this. Do not attack lama Ngokpa's disciples. If you attack them I will continue to cast hailstorms like this." They conveyed this threat and the two regions thus respectfully paid reverence to the lama. They became his patrons and later offered him their service.

I came upon the corpses of many small birds lying beneath a thicket and corpses of birds and mice all along the road. I collected them as I went along, filling the hood of my rain cover

and the lower skirts of my cloak. I piled the corpses in a heap before the lama, and said, "Precious lama, I came here for the genuine dharma, but have done only evil deeds. Look upon me, a terrible sinner, with compassion." And I cried.

The lama replied, "Layman Great Magician, you need not worry so much. We in the lineage of Nāropa and Maitrīpa have an oral instruction called 'driving one hundred birds with a single slingshot' through which terrible sinners may swiftly become a buddha. All of the beings now killed by the hailstorm will in the future be born as the first members of your retinue in your pure realm when you are a completely perfect buddha. Be happy that until then, through my power, they will not take rebirth in an unfortunate realm. If you do not believe me, watch this." After resting in contemplation for a moment, he snapped his fingers and all the corpses suddenly came back to life. In that instant some flew up in the sky, while others scurried on the ground, each going back to its own home.

I saw the lama as an actual buddha and I thought, "How wonderful! How wonderful! It is indeed gratifying that, on this occasion, so many sentient beings have died."

The lama then imparted the Hevajra initiation. After he gave the oral instructions, I fixed up a south-facing cave on the side of a ravine overlooking the lama's residence. Then I sealed myself in. The lama gave dharma instructions through a small window and I meditated without distraction. Since I had not received Marpa's permission, no experience whatsoever occurred.

On one occasion, the lama said, "Layman Great Magician, have such-and-such signs appeared?"

"None whatsoever have appeared," I replied.

"What are you saying? As long as there is no stain of broken commitments in my lineage, the qualities of experience and realization develop quickly. It could not be otherwise. You have come with faith in me. If you didn't receive Marpa's permission, why did he send the gifts? What's going on? In any case, apply yourself and meditate."

I was paralyzed with fear. I wondered whether I should divulge the real story. But lacking the courage to speak, I thought,

"I must, by all means, remain lama Marpa's disciple." Then I applied myself and stayed in meditation.

Meanwhile, lama Marpa had the remainder of his son's tower completed. A letter from him arrived at Ngokpa's residence. It said:

> Here, I am presently in need of tamarisk cane roofing for my son's tower. Send ahead an offering of as many loads of tamarisk cane as you can. I shall all at once raise the tamarisk roofing and golden spire, consecrate the tower, and celebrate Darma Dodé's coming-of-age. Come attend those yourself. Furthermore, you have a certain evil person who belongs to me. Bring him as well at that time.

Lama Ngok came to the window of my cave and, showing me the letter, said, "From the way this letter describes me as having an evil person, it seems that you did not receive the lama's permission."

I replied, "I did not really have the lama's consent. The lama's wife gave me the letter and the religious items and then sent me here."

"What's this? In that case, the work we've been doing is pointless. If you didn't receive the lama's permission then the qualities of meditation will never manifest. There is nothing to be done. He ordered you to return. Will you go or not?"

"I request to go as your servant," I said.

"In that case, I have sent the tamarisk cane, and afterward someone will arrange a time for our departure. Until then, remain in retreat."

The person who arranged the time for our departure returned and appeared at my window. We discussed in detail how the tower consecration and the son's coming-of-age celebration would be performed.

"Was there any talk about me?" I inquired.

"There was. The lady asked, 'What is my son doing?' I replied that you were in strict retreat. So she asked, 'Other than that, what is he doing?' I replied that you were staying in an

isolated place. She then said, 'He left this item of his behind. He played with it while he lived here, so deliver it to him,' and she handed this over to me."

The messenger loosened his belt and handed over a single die made of clay. Thinking it was touched by the lady's hands, I placed it to my head to receive blessings.

When the messenger left, I was taken with a desire to play dice, so I played. "I had never before played dice in the lady's presence," I thought. "I suppose she no longer thinks of me kindly. And it was dice that long ago drove my ancestors from their homeland." Swinging the die above my head, I threw it down. It broke open and a scroll of paper appeared, which I read. It said, "Now the lama will give initiation and oral instructions even to you, son, so come with lama Ngok." I was overjoyed and danced back and forth in the cave.

Then lama Ngokpa said to me, "Layman Great Magician, prepare to leave." I did so.

Lama Ngok gathered all of his household items, including all the religious representations of body, speech, and mind—leaving behind only the blessed items given by lama Marpa himself—as well as his gold, turquoise, silks, and garments. He ordered me to leave an old she-goat with a broken leg that could not follow the herd. Apart from that, he took all his livestock from the stable and the meadow. As we were preparing to depart, the lama said to me, "Since you have also been helpful to me, take this as a gift for your meeting with lama Marpa," and he gave me a bolt of silk. His wife too gave me a leather bag of soft cheese and said, "Take this as a gift for Lady Dakmema."

Then lama Ngokpa, together with his wife and retinue, set out and arrived at the lower reaches of Drowolung. The lama said, "Layman Great Magician, go on ahead and inform the lady that we are coming. See if she might send some beer."

I went ahead and first met the lama's wife. I offered her the bag of soft cheese. Then I said, "Lama Ngok is coming, so please give some beer to welcome him."

Overjoyed, she replied, "The lama is in his residence, so go present this request yourself."

I went to make the request. The lama was on the upper ter-

race of his residence, looking to the east, and seated in meditative practice. I offered prostrations and the bolt of silk, but he turned to look toward the west. I prostrated from the west, but he turned to look toward the south.

"Revered lama," I cried, "it is right that you will not accept my prostrations in order to punish me. Lama Ngok is arriving, carrying as offerings all of the valuables he possesses: religious representations of body, speech, and mind, gold and turquoise, as well as all the livestock he owns, crossbred yaks, horses, and so forth. It seems that he would like some beer to welcome him, so I request that you please send him some."

Rising in anger, he snapped his fingers and said in a fierce voice, "When I returned from India I brought with me, from among the inconceivable collections of the Buddha's teaching, the extraordinary heart-instructions that extract the essential meaning of the four classes of tantra. At that time, not so much as a lame bird came to greet me. It is not possible that I, a great *lotsawa,* should greet him simply because he is coming, driving with him a few straggling animals. Now go back."

I reported the lama's words to his wife. She said, "The lama answered in anger. Ngok is a great man and needs to be greeted. Let us, mother and son, both go."

"Lama Ngokpa does not expect the lama or the lady to greet him."

"If he has requested a portion of good beer, I too will go," said the lady. Some disciples brought a large quantity of beer and she went to greet him.

Meanwhile, many people from Lhodrak gathered to celebrate the coming-of-age of Marpa's son and the consecration of his residence, held together with a lavish feast. From the rows of celebrants, lama Marpa sang this song of auspiciousness and benediction:

I address my prayer to the lamas endowed with kindness.

This precious lineage of mine
Has the fortune of freedom from downfalls.
May such fortune bring fortune once more.

The short path of profound oral instruction
Has the fortune of freedom from errors.
May such fortune bring fortune once more.

Marpa Lotsawa, I myself
Have the fortune of profound key points.
May such fortune bring fortune once more.

The lamas, *yidams,* and *ḍākinīs*
Have the fortune of blessings and feats.
May such fortune bring fortune once more.

The assembly of my senior disciples
Have the fortune of faith and commitments.
May such fortune bring fortune once more.

My patrons and countrymen near and far
Have the fortune of stores and good means.
May such fortune bring fortune once more.

All activities and all endeavors
Have the fortune of benefit and enlightenment.
May such fortune bring fortune once more.

Gods and demons of the phenomenal world
Have the fortune of powerful oaths.
May such fortune bring fortune once more.

The celestials and humans gathered here
Have the fortune of my prayers for well-being.
May such fortune bring fortune once more.

When he finished, lama Ngokpa presented his offerings and said, "Precious lama, in general terms the lama is master of my three gates. But now on this occasion I offer the lama all of the livestock I own except for one lame milking goat that, for one thing, is the grandmother of the entire herd and is thus quite old. But more important, she has an injured leg and

could not get here. Please look upon me with compassion and grant initiation and all the foremost oral instructions, in particular the instructions of the aural scrolls." He then offered prostrations.

Lama Marpa appeared pleased and said, "Indeed, as you say, my foremost profound initiations and oral instructions are, generally speaking, the short path of the Vajra Vehicle, the oral instructions by which one becomes a buddha in this life without having to wait for innumerable eons. In particular, the instructions of the aural scrolls are restricted by the command seal of the lama and *ḍākinīs*. Thus they will be difficult to obtain if you do not offer the goat, even though she is old and infirm. I have already given the other oral instructions to you."

A wave of laughter erupted from all those seated there, but lama Ngokpa again asked, "If I bring the old milk goat and offer her, will you lift the command seal and grant the instructions?"

"If you bring the goat and offer it, I shall."

In the morning, when everyone had dispersed, lama Ngokpa set out alone. He returned carrying the goat on his back and offered it to the lama. Very much pleased by this, the lama said, "You can truly be called a disciple of Secret Mantra who maintains his commitments. I have little use for a goat but needed to emphasize the great value of the dharma." He then promised to impart many of the foremost initiations and oral instructions. Later he did so.

Then some small groups of disciples from afar and family members gathered together and performed a feast offering of appreciation. Marpa sat at the head of the assembly row with a long acacia-wood staff resting at his side. He stared straight at lama Ngokpa and pointed a finger menacingly. "Ngoktön Chödor," he said, "what is your reason for granting initiation and oral instructions to the evil man called Töpaga?" He glanced at the staff.

Terrified, Lama Ngokpa offered prostrations, saying, "Precious lama, you sent to me your letter directing me to confer initiation upon Great Magician and to teach him the oral instructions, together with the ornaments of Nāropa and his rosary made

of ruby. Doing so, I carried out your command. I therefore feel neither shame nor regret, and am not worthy of reprimand or blame. Please understand this." He lifted his eyes nervously.

Pointing a menacing finger at me, the lama said, "Where did you get those objects?"

My heart ached as if it were being torn out and I was so terrified I could hardly utter a word. With a trembling voice I said, "The lady gave them to me."

The lama jumped up, grabbed the acacia-wood staff, and went to beat his wife. Having anticipated this, the lady had already gotten up and moved some distance away, where she now sat. She then fled inside the shrine room and shut the door. The lama scratched at the door several times and finally returned to his seat. He said, "You, the one called Ngoktön Chödor who has acted without permission, bring my ornaments of Nāropa and ruby rosary this instant." Then he covered his head with his shawl and sat there.

Lama Ngokpa immediately offered prostrations and left to fetch the ornaments and rosary. I had fled at the same time as the lady and, overcome with sadness and despair, I sat secretly weeping. I saw lama Ngokpa when he appeared outside and begged him to take me along as his servant. He said, "If I were to take you without receiving the lama's permission, things would only end up as they did today and we would both be miserable. So for the moment, stay. Later, if he really won't accept you as a disciple and grants his permission, I shall do whatever I can."

"Well then," I replied, "it's on account of my great sins and obscurations that such misery has fallen upon you, lama, and your lady. Since I will not obtain the dharma in this life, and since I have been accumulating terrible sins, I will kill myself. When I am reborn in a future life with a precious human body, I beg that you hold me with compassion."

As I was about to kill myself, lama Ngokpa restrained me. Weeping, he said, "Layman Great Magician, don't do such a thing! You must understand that according to the tradition of Secret Mantra, the Victor's ultimate teachings, our aggregates, constituents, and the sense fields are deities. Performing trans-

ference before it's time carries the offense of killing a deity. Killing oneself is an even graver sin. Even in the tradition of the sutras, there is no worse negative act than taking one's own life. Therefore, listen to these injunctions and give up all thoughts of suicide. It is still possible that the lama will give you the dharma. If he does not, you will certainly obtain it from another lama."

While he was giving me this advice some other disciples, unable to bear my misery, went up to see if it was a good time to intercede with the lama. Others came down to comfort me. I was overcome with such anguish that I thought, "Is my heart made of iron? If not, it will burst and I shall die."

It was because I had done terrible actions in this first part of my life that I experienced such suffering in order to request the dharma.

Thus Milarepa spoke.

At this point in the story, not a single person among all those listening to the discourse could keep from bursting into tears. Some, overcome with feelings of world-weariness and renunciation, nearly fainted.

This was the second of the supreme deeds, the deed in which he purified negativities and obscurations through misery and despair.

CHAPTER SIX

Then Rechungpa asked, "Under what circumstances did lama Marpa then accept the Jetsün as a disciple?"

Milarepa continued:

The resident disciples went back and forth between us and after a while Marpa rose from his contemplation. In a calm mood he said, "Bring Dakmema here now." Someone went to bring the lady. When she appeared he said, "Where have Ngok Chöku Dorjé and the other disciples gone?"

"In accordance with the lama's command that he bring Nāro's ornaments and rosary, lama Ngokpa prepared to fetch them and went outside. Layman Great Magician made this-and-that request, and lama Ngok is with him now offering this-and-that advice." Thus she described the scene in detail.

A tear ran down Marpa's face. He said, "Those called 'disciples of Secret Mantra' must be like that, and he has turned out to be just so. Now I feel compassion for my disciples, so call them."

One of the resident disciples went to call lama Ngokpa. He approached and said, "The lama is now calm and has sent me to call you in, so please come."

"Compared to the happiness of those with karmic fortune," I said, "I, a man of evil karma, lack the fortune to go before the lama when he is calm. And if I did go, I would receive only scolding and abuse."

I sat there weeping. Lama Ngok also stayed, and to the resident disciple he said, "Explain Layman Great Magician's reasons to the lama and see if it is acceptable for Great Magician

to approach him. If I do not stay here in the meantime, there is the danger that he will do something terrible."

The disciple explained my reasoning to lama Marpa, who replied, "In the past he would have been right. But now I have no need to act in such a manner. On this occasion, the chief guest is to be Great Magician. Dakmema, go and call him."

The lady arrived beaming with a smile and said, "Layman Great Magician, this morning it seems that the lama will accept you as a disciple. The lama said this time you are to be the guest of honor and he sent me to call you. It is a sign that he is moved by deep compassion. He did not even scold me. Rejoice and let's go."

I wondered whether this time it was true and, wrongly filled with doubt, I went in and took my place in the row of guests.

The lama said, "If we examine things carefully, none of us is at fault. From my side, I have only tormented Great Magician in order to purify his negative deeds. Had his work on the tower been in my own interest, I would have directed him more gently. So, in this matter I was correct. As for Dakmema, to begin with she is a woman. She also has tremendous compassion and could not bear the situation, so she too was correct. But forging the letter and sending the gift of religious objects were serious offenses. As for Ngok Chöku Dorjé, you were correct, as you have stated. However, return the religious objects for a short time. I will give them to you later. As for Great Magician, he was burning with desire for the dharma, so he was correct to obtain it by any means possible. Ngok did not know that Dakmema had sent a forged letter. Thus I see no reason to punish him, even though he granted Great Magician initiation and oral instructions.

"Although I may have let loose a flood of heated and misguided words, they were not like those of a worldly person. However they may have appeared, from the perspective of the dharma they were intended to wear down self-importance and so, in essence, they lead to the path of enlightenment. Those of you seated in line who do not understand the dharma, don't lose faith.

"Had I the opportunity to punish this son of mine nine times, he would have become a buddha devoid of physical remainder and without needing to take another human birth. Since this did not happen, some slight residue of negativities and obscurations remains, brought about by Dakmema's foolishness. Still, your major negativities have been eradicated by means of eight great agonies and many minor adversities. Now I shall accept you as a disciple and give you the oral instructions that are like this old man's heart. I shall then give you whatever supplies you may need for retreat and set you to meditate. So rejoice!"

At that moment I wondered, "Is this a dream or is it really happening? If it is a dream, I would be happy never to awaken." I was filled with immeasurable joy at this thought, and I offered prostrations while shedding tears of pure delight. Thus the entire assembly—the lady, lama Ngokpa, and the rest—thought, "The lama showed great skill and mastery when wearing him down and great compassion when accepting him as a disciple. The lama himself is truly a buddha." They were filled with even greater faithful admiration, and out of affection for me they shed tears, cried thanks, and offered prostrations. Finally, in a festive mood, the entire assembly held a ritual feast.

That evening, offerings were laid out at the place where the assembly had gathered. The lama said, "I shall give you the common vows of individual liberation." After my hair was shaved and my clothes changed, the lama said, "Your name was originally foretold by Nāropa in a dream I had before we met." He gave me the name Mila Dorjé Gyaltsen and then granted me the vows of a layman and the bodhisattva precepts. Then he offered me a skull cup of inner offerings with the special blessings of his mental powers. Everyone thus clearly saw the oblation bubbling with light rays of the five colors. He first offered it to the lamas and chosen deities. Next Marpa himself partook. Then he gave the skull cup to me and I emptied it completely.

"This is an auspicious omen," said the lama. "Tasting the

nectar of my inner offerings is greater than all four initiations of some other lineages. However, starting tomorrow, I shall give you the ripening initiations of Secret Mantra."

Then he constructed an extensive mandala of Cakrasaṃvara with sixty-two deities. When he revealed the mandala for bestowing the initiation, he pointed to the circle of colored powder. "This is called the symbolic mandala. The actual mandala is there," he said and he pointed up to the sky. I clearly saw Cakrasaṃvara surrounded by the heroes and *ḍākinīs* of the twenty-four lands, the thirty-two sites, and the eight great charnel grounds, all vividly present. At that moment, the lama and the deities of the mandala in a single voice conferred upon me the secret name Pel Zhepa Dorjé. The lama imparted at length the oral transmission of the tantra and then taught the complete practice of the quintessential instructions along with the performance of rituals.

Then, placing his hand on my head, he said, "Son, I knew from the very beginning that you were a worthy disciple. The night before your arrival at my home, I had a dream that was a sign you would benefit the Buddha's teaching. Dakmema had a similar dream in which women served as religious stewards, *ḍākinīs* who had come to act as custodians of the dharma. Thus you appeared as a disciple given to me by the lama and *ḍākinīs*. This being the case, I went to greet you in the guise of a plowman. You drank all the beer I gave you and plowed the entire field, signs that you would be a worthy recipient of the oral instructions and that you would perfectly master them. The four handles on the copper kettle you offered are signs of the coming of my four famous disciples. The vessel's lack of blemishes such as grime is a sign that your mind will be little blemished by mental afflictions and that your body will gain control in the bliss-warmth of yogic heat. Because you offered the kettle empty, you will have only meager sustenance while you meditate. But in order to bring about great resources for you later in life and for your line of disciples, and in order that worthy disciples be satisfied by the elixir of the oral instructions, I filled it with melted butter from my offering lamps. In order to secure your great renown, I rang it as loudly as I

could. In order to purify your karmic obscurations, I repeatedly drove you to despair with many cruelties such as burdening you with constructing towers of pacification, enrichment, subjugation, and destruction; and kicking you out of the initiation line. Yet you never gave way to wrong views. Therefore the disciples in your lineage will, in the beginning, have all the essential qualities of a student, including faith, diligence, wisdom, and compassion. In the middle they will have little attachment to the pleasures of this life and, with perseverance in the face of austerity, will show great fortitude while meditating in the mountains. Finally, endowed with experience, blessings, knowledge, and kindness, they will become fully qualified lamas. The teachings of the Kagyu will thus expand like the waxing moon, so rejoice!"

This prediction uplifted and encouraged me, filling me with joy. It was the beginning of my happiness.

Thus Milarepa spoke.

This was the third of the supreme deeds, the deed of his receiving initiation and oral instructions.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Again Rechungpa asked, "Did the Jetsün set forth into mountain retreat right after receiving the oral instructions, or did he remain with the lama?"

Milarepa continued:

The lama directed me to exert myself in practice. Providing me with ample supplies, he then set me to meditate at Taknya Cliff in Lhodrak. During that period, I filled an offering lamp with melted butter and lit it. Then I placed it on my head and meditated day and night without moving my body until the lamp was extinguished. Eleven months passed.

Then the lama and his wife came, bringing lavish supplies for a ritual feast. The lama said, "Son, for you to meditate for eleven months without your cushion growing cold is most excellent. Now tear down the cell door and come beside your old father to rest your weary body and discuss the experiences you have had."

"This is the real sustenance for my weary body," I thought. "But since it is my lama's command I must go." As I began tearing down the door, the cell suddenly felt quite dear to me and I stood there reluctant to continue. Just then the lama's wife came up and asked, "Son, are you coming?"

"I cannot bring myself to tear down the cell door," I replied.

"There is nothing wrong," she said. "In general, Secret Mantra emphasizes the importance of profound auspicious connections. More importantly, the lama has a fiery temper so it will not do to mishandle this auspicious moment. Your mother will tear down the cell door, so come quickly." She tore it down. Thinking that she was right, I came out.

The lama said, "The two of us, father and son, shall practice the rituals for cultivating clear realization. Dakmema, prepare a ritual feast." While we were making the feast offering the lama asked, "Son, what certainty have you gained about the oral instructions? Relax your mind and describe what kind of understanding, experience, and realization you have had."

Feeling great faith and devotion toward the lama, I knelt down and joined my palms in prayer. With tears streaming from my eyes, as a prelude to presenting my experience and realization, I first offered this sevenfold service to the lama in song:

I bow to your various emanation bodies
Displayed before impure disciples,
And to your venerable enjoyment body
Revealed to your circle of pure disciples.

I bow to your speech, at once audible and empty,
Which enunciates the eighty-four thousand true dharmas
With the sixty qualities of Brahmā's voice
To each person in his own language.

I bow to your mind, changeless reality body,
Which embraces all objects of knowledge
While remaining unobscured by conceptual marks
In the space of the luminosity reality body.

I bow down at the feet of great lady Dakmé,
Birth mother of the buddhas of the three times,
Unchanging selfless (*dakmé*) illusory body
Dwelling in the pure palace of reality's expanse.

I prostrate with unfeigned devotion
To the spiritual sons you have gathered,
The assembly of disciples who practice as taught,
Together with all of their followers.

In your presence I offer my body
And whatever material offerings exist

Throughout all realms of the universe.
I confess each of my negative deeds.
I rejoice in all forms of merit.
I pray that you turn the great wheel of dharma.
I pray that the glorious lama remain
Until life's round is emptied.
I dedicate my accumulated virtue to the benefit of sentient beings.

"Having first offered the sevenfold service in this way," I continued, "to my sovereign master, I present the meager understanding I have gained through the utterly pure enlightened activity of the lama—inseparable from Vajradhara—his consort and children, through the power of the blessings of his immeasurable compassion, and through his unbounded kindness. I pray listen to my words of little eloquence with your mind in the state of unchanging reality.

"I have understood that, due to the fundamental condition of ignorance, the body comprised of flesh and blood fully formed, together with its perceiving consciousness, initially coalesce through the twelve links of dependent origination, formations and so forth. For those with merit who desire liberation, it is a ferry to a future life of freedoms and endowments. For those with evil karma who amass sinful deeds, it is a guide leading to the lower realms. This is a truly decisive moment, the boundary between journeying up or down, and one that determines the profit or loss leading to lasting good or lasting evil far into the future.

"Moreover, relying upon your power as lord and guide of beings, I seek release from the ocean of life's round, the source of all suffering so difficult to escape. I first sought refuge in the lama and three jewels and then trained properly in the discipline. I have understood that in such a context, the source of all goodness and happiness is the lama. Therefore, the primary and essential point is to follow whatever he commands and to maintain the sacred commitments purely. Then, intensively contemplating the difficulty of attaining the freedoms and endowments of a human rebirth, death and impermanence, the causes and effects of actions, and the faults of life's round, one

is overwhelmed by the desire for liberation from life's round. One should then rely on the appropriate vows of individual liberation, which are like the foundation. Upon such a basis, one gradually ascends through the religious vehicles, guarding as closely as one's eyes the disciplines they describe. If transgressed, the vows must be restored.

"But since it is a mistake to practice the Lower Vehicle seeking happiness and peace for oneself, through the desire to free all sentient beings from life's round in its entirety, one generates the mind set on enlightenment. With love and compassion, everything one does is dedicated to the benefit of others—this, I have understood, is arousing the attitude of enlightenment according to the Great Vehicle. One gives up the path of Hearers and Solitary Buddhas and enters the path of the Great Vehicle. Then, maintaining a completely pure view as a basis, one enters the path of the unsurpassed Vajra Vehicle. In order to realize a completely pure view, one needs a fully qualified lama with the wisdom and skillful means to impart all the pure rites of the four initiations, and to transmit their meaning without error. Initiation or 'empowerment' means to have power over the profound view and from that point on one meditates in a gradual way.

First, in the common Dialectics Vehicle, one sets out in search of the selflessness of persons. Employing numerous examples and reasons drawn from both scripture and logic, one does not find a self, and indeed one comes to realize the selflessness of persons. One must then rest the mind evenly within the state in which the self was not found. When it is brought to rest through various means, conceptual thoughts cease and the mind relaxes in a non-conceptual state. When months and years pass by without noticing and one needs to be informed of the time by others, then one has achieved serenity. One maintains this state by means of mindfulness, and without succumbing to mental sinking or torpor, one draws forth the vitality of awareness. Thus one experiences serenity in this way: appearing while lacking self-nature, luminous while lacking conceptuality, naked, unadulterated, brilliant, vivid.

"It is also possible to take up the practice of insight, although genuine insight will not manifest for ordinary individuals. I be-

lieve only those who have attained the first bodhisattva level will experience it. This being the case, one incorporates outward appearances onto the path by relying upon visualization practice. Other kinds of visionary experiences, deities and so forth, may appear through the practice of serenity, but I believe they are merely signs of meditation and have no essence whatsoever.

"In brief, experience of excellent serenity together with vitality in practice, as well as analysis by means of a profound discriminating wisdom, are indispensable for the attainment of insight. I consider them to be like the lower rungs of a ladder. I have understood that whatever kind of serenity meditation one practices, such as those with signs or those without signs, developing an attitude of love and compassion must precede them all. Whatever one does, it must be embraced by the attitude of enlightenment that aims to benefit others. Next, with a completely pure view one should train in meditation that lacks a reference point. Finally, one practices within a state free from reference points, sealed by prayers dedicated to the benefit of others—this is supreme among all paths.

"I have understood that, just as the knowledge of food does not help a starving man, but rather he needs to eat, it is not enough to comprehend the meaning of realizing emptiness—one must meditate. In particular I have understood that, in order to realize insight, one must strive without distraction to accumulate merit and purify misdeeds in the periods between meditation sessions.

"In short, I have now understood that the experiences of emptiness, evenness, ineffability, and non-conceptuality gained by yogins through practice are the view of the stages of the path of the Secret Mantra Vajra Vehicle, which correspond to the four initiations. In order to actualize my understanding of these things I will mortify my body, deprive myself of food, and bridle my mind. Having done so, I will shape my perception and withstand even the possibility of death so that whatever happens I will recognize everything as having the same taste.

"I have not come before the lama and lady, whose kindness I cannot repay, to present a token material offering. Instead I

present an offering of my practice, as much as I am able to carry out for as long as I live. I shall present my final realization to you in the palace of Akaniṣṭha.

Lama, great Vajradhara,
Lady Dakmé, birth mother of buddhas,
And those assembled, emanations of the Victor's sons,
For your ears I offer some words
Of the understanding that arose in my mind.
Please forgive all the flaws in my knowledge,
Ignorance, distortion, confusion,
And remedy them according to dharma.

Lord, from the mandala sun of your compassion
Warm rays of blessings have shone,
Causing the lotus of my mind to blossom.
This sweet scent of experience and realization radiating from it
Cannot repay your kindness.
Instead I offer the ongoing gift of my practice.

May my practice be brought to completion,
And its results serve to benefit beings.
If this commoner's words are too bold, I ask your forgiveness.

Delighted, the lama said, "I had hoped as much from you, and such hopes have been fulfilled."

The lady, also extremely pleased, said, "This son of mine has the fortitude and capability to have come this far." After engaging in much dharma discussion, the lama and lady returned to their home. Meanwhile, I continued my meditation in retreat as before.

About this time, the lama traveled to Üru in the north for the benefit of beings. One night, as he conducted a ritual feast at the home of Marpa Golek, a *ḍākinī* deciphered one of Nāropa's symbolic teachings that he had not understood before then and encouraged him through signs. Thinking he should go to see Nāropa, Marpa returned to Drowolung. One night, while he

was resting there for a few days, a woman appeared to me in a dream, blue in color, beautifully adorned in garments of pure silk and bone ornaments, her eyebrows and facial hair brilliant gold. "Son," she said, "you already have the instructions on the Great Seal and the Six Dharmas through which one becomes a buddha by meditating for a long time. But you do not have the special instructions on Ejection and Transference through which one becomes a buddha by meditating for a single instant. Request it!" Then she disappeared.

Thinking it over I wondered, "Although the woman appeared in the guise of a *ḍākinī,* is this a prophetic command of the *ḍākinīs* or a demonic obstacle? I don't know. Whatever it is, there is nothing that my lama, in essence the buddhas of the three times, does not know, from the instructions for attaining buddhahood down to advice for fixing a broken clay pot. If it is a prophetic command of the *ḍākinīs,* I must by all means request Transference." Then I pulled down the mud wall of my cell and went to see the lama.

"Without maintaining strict retreat, there is a danger that obstacles may beset you," said the lama. "Why have you come?"

I described the woman who appeared and what she said. "I don't know if it is an obstacle or a prophetic command. If it is a prophetic command, then I have come to request that you grant the instructions on Transference."

The lama reflected for a moment and then said, "It is a prophetic command of the *ḍākinīs.* When I was returning from India, Paṇchen Nāropa spoke about Transference but I do not remember requesting it. I will look through my texts from India and search for it." For a whole day and night without break we, master and disciple together, searched for texts on Transference. We came across numerous manuals on Ejection but did not find a single word about Transference. The lama said, "The signs that appeared while I was in Üru in the north have also encouraged me to request these instructions. There may be other instructions as well that I do not know, so I will go request them."

I reminded him of his advanced age, but he would not be dissuaded on any account. He exchanged his disciples' offer-

ings for gold. Then, carrying a vessel filled with gold, he set off for India.

Nāropa had departed to engage in yogic activity and Marpa intended to pursue him without regard for his own life. He interpreted numerous omens that foretold that they would meet. Praying fervently, he eventually met Nāropa in a dense forest and invited him to the hermitage of Pullahari where he requested instructions on Transference.

Paṇchen Nāropa asked, "Did you think of this yourself or did you receive a prophetic command?"

"I neither thought of it myself nor received a prophetic command. I have a disciple named Töpaga who received the prophetic command of a *ḍākinī* and he came to request it from me."

"How marvelous. In the gloomy land of Tibet lives a man like the sun rising over the snows." Raising his hands in prayer to the crown of his head, Nāropa continued:

> In the gloomy darkness of the north
> Lives the one called Töpaga
> Like the sun rising over the snows.
> To that man I bow down.

He closed his eyes and bowed his head three times. All the mountains, trees, and plants in India then bowed toward Tibet. Even now the mountains and trees of Pullahari bend in the direction of Tibet. Nāropa then imparted all the instructions of the *ḍākinī* aural transmission, and afterward he interpreted certain omens. Based upon the way Marpa prostrated, he received the prophecy that stated, "Although your family lineage will be short, your dharma lineage of enlightened activity will extend longer than the stretch of a river." Marpa then returned to Tibet.

Later Marpa's son Darma Dodé passed away, just as foretold by the prophecy of his prostration style. During the offering ceremony commemorating the anniversary of his son's death, the senior disciples, seated in line among all the resident students, said to the lama, "Precious lama, your son, who was

like the buddhas of the three times, can no longer work for the merit of us sentient beings and the lama is himself advanced in age. Therefore, please give us a prophetic command describing how the precious Kagyu teachings should be spread, what sort of followers we disciples will have, and what kinds of enlightened activity we will pursue."

The lama replied, "I, a descendant in the line of Nāro Paṇchen, have gained mastery over omens and dreams. I also have Paṇchen Nāro's excellent prophetic command regarding the Kagyu teachings. You, my foremost disciples, go await your dreams."

Later, the senior disciples took note of their dreams and reported them. Everyone had dreams and some dreams were good, but none of the dreams revealed a prophecy. I had a dream of four great pillars, which I described to the lama in this way:

> In accordance with Lord Vajradhara's command,
> To the lama I set forth my dream from last night
> And the way it appeared before me.
> Please lend an ear and listen to me.
>
> Here in the world's broad and vast northern quarter
> I dreamt that there stood a grand mountain of snows.
> I dreamt that its glacial summit touched the sky.
> I dreamt that the sun and moon coursed round its peak.
> I dreamt that their light filled all of space.
> I dreamt that its base covered the whole of the earth.
> I dreamt that rivers ran down in the four directions.
> I dreamt that their waters satisfied all beings.
> I dreamt that the rivers drained into the sea.
> I dreamt that all manner of flowers bloomed forth.
> In general, such was the dream that I dreamt.
> I recount the dream to my lama, the three-times buddhas.
>
> In particular, from this towering grand snowy mountain
> I dreamt to the east a great pillar was raised.
> I dreamt high on the pillar a great lion stood regal.

I dreamt the lion's turquoise mane spread open wide.
I dreamt the claws of his four paws spread out on the glacier.
I dreamt that his eyes gazed toward the heavens.
I dreamt that the lion leaped about on the snow.
I recount the dream to my lama, the three-times buddhas.

I dreamt to the south a great pillar was raised.
I dreamt high on the pillar a tigress riled herself up.
I dreamt that the tigress's striped fur stood on end.
I dreamt that she smiled three times.
I dreamt the claws of her four paws spread out through the forest.
I dreamt that her eyes gazed toward the heavens.
I dreamt that the tigress leaped about through the forest.
I dreamt that the forest of pine groves were tangled.
I recount the dream to my lama, the three-times buddhas.

I dreamt to the west a great pillar was raised.
I dreamt high on the pillar a large *garuḍa* hovered.
I dreamt the *garuḍa*'s plume fanned open wide.
I dreamt the *garuḍa*'s horns were raised to the sky.
I dreamt that its eyes gazed toward the heavens.
I dreamt the *garuḍa* flew off into space.
I recount the dream to my lama, the three-times buddhas.

I dreamt to the north a great pillar was raised.
I dreamt high on the pillar a vulture hovered.
I dreamt the vulture's plume fanned open wide.
I dreamt the vulture's aerie was perched on a crag.
I dreamt that unto the vulture a sole chick was born.
I dreamt that the sky was filled with small birds.
I dreamt that its eyes gazed toward the heavens.
I dreamt that the vulture flew off into space.
I recount my dream to the lama, the three-times buddhas.

Are the omens of a dream such as this, I wonder,
Signs of most excellent virtue?
Such a pleasing experience has me filled with delight.
Please tell me its meaning, I pray.

Greatly pleased, the lama said, "An excellent dream!" To his wife he added, "Dakmema, prepare a ritual feast."

The lady gathered the necessary materials, the foremost disciples assembled, and then they performed a magnificent ritual feast. From his seat in the assembly row the lama remarked, "How amazing that Mila Dorjé Gyaltsen has had such a dream."

The senior disciples said, "Please unravel the dream's meaning and prophesy what it foretells."

Then the great translator, a supreme individual, sang this song, which interpreted the dream for the disciples:

Lord, protector of beings, the three-times buddhas,
Paṇchen Nāro, I bow at your feet.

All disciples filling the seats here before me,
Listen as I, your old father, will tell you
This wondrous prediction of what is to come,
Made clear from the signs of the dream.

The surface of the earth in the world's northern quarter
Is the Buddha's teaching spreading here in Tibet.
The snow mountain standing upon it
Is your old father Marpa Lotsawa and
The complete Kagyu teachings.
The glacial summit touching the sky
Is the incomparable view.
The sun and moon coursing round its peak
Are luminosity and wisdom-compassion in meditation.
The light filling all of space
Is compassion dispelling the darkness of ignorance.
The base of the mountain covering the earth
Is enlightened activity pervading the world.
The rivers running down in the four directions
Are the ripening and liberating instructions of the four initiations.
Satisfying all beings with their water
Is the ripening and liberation of disciples.

The rivers draining into the sea
Is the meeting of mother and son luminosities.
All manner of flowers blooming forth
Is the experience of unblemished fruition.
In general the dream is not inauspicious, what an excellent dream it is,
O resident disciples, my sons, gathered here.

In particular, from this grand snowy mountain
The great pillar raised to the east
Is Tsurtön Wangé of Dol.
The great lion standing regal high on the pillar
Means his character is like that of a lion.
The lion's turquoise mane spread open wide
Is his reception of aural transmission instructions.
The claws of his four paws spread out on the glacier
Are his being endowed with the Four Immeasurables.
His eyes gazing toward the heavens
Are his waving good-bye to life's round.
The lion's leaping about on the snows
Is his journey into liberation's sanctum.
The dream of the east is not inauspicious, what an excellent dream it is,
O resident disciples, my sons, gathered here.

The great pillar raised to the south
Is Ngoktön Chödor of Zhung.
The tigress riled up high on the pillar
Means his character is like that of a tiger.
The tigress's striped fur standing on end
Is his reception of the aural transmission instructions.
The three smiles that she smiled
Are his recognition of the three bodies within himself.
The claws of her four paws stretched out through the forest
Are his achievement of the four enlightened activities.
Her eyes gazing toward the heavens
Are his waving good-bye to life's round.
The tigress's leaping about through the forest
Is his journey into liberation's sanctum.
The entangled forest of pine-groves

Is his lineage maintained by sons and grandsons.
The dream of the south is not inauspicious, what an excellent dream it is,
All you resident disciples, my sons, gathered here.

The great pillar raised to the west
Is Metön Tsönpo of Tsangrong.
The large *garuḍa* hovering high on the pillar
Means his character is like that of a *garuḍa*.
The *garuḍa*'s plume fanned open wide
Is his reception of the aural transmission instructions.
The *garuḍa*'s horns raised to the sky
Are his cutting through deviations in view and meditation.
Its eyes gazing toward the heavens
Are his waving good-bye to life's round.
The *garuḍa*'s flying off through space
Is his journey into liberation's sanctum.
The dream of the west is not inauspicious, what an excellent dream it is,
All you resident disciples, my sons, gathered here.

The great pillar raised to the north
Is Milarepa of Gungtang.
The vulture hovering high on the pillar
Means his character is like that of a vulture.
The vulture's plume fanned open wide
Is his reception of the aural transmission instructions.
The vulture's aerie perched high on a crag
Means his life force will be firmer than rock.
The sole chick born unto the vulture
Is his one unrivaled son who will appear.
The small birds filling the sky
Is the spread of the Kagyu teachings.
Its eyes gazing toward the heavens
Are his waving good-bye to life's round.
The vulture's flying off through space
Is his journey into liberation's sanctum.
The dream of the north is not inauspicious, what an excellent dream it is,
Such have I told to you all gathered here.

As for your old father, my work is completed.
Now, you disciples, your hour has come.
If you pay attention to the words of this old man now,
The practice lineage teachings will spread in the future.

When he had finished, all those assembled were filled with immeasurable joy. Then, for his senior disciples, the lama opened the treasure chest of dharma and oral instructions. By day he gave teachings and by night he set us in meditation. Everyone developed excellent meditative experience.

One evening during this period, while imparting the profound initiation of Nairātmyā, the lama contemplated which dharma transmission lineage and activity would be most suitable for each of his foremost disciples so that he might give them the appropriate instructions. He resolved to interpret the omens at dawn the next morning. At dawn, while resting in a state of luminosity, he observed his foremost disciples. He saw that Ngoktön Chödor of Zhung was studying how to explain several commentaries of the *Hevajra Tantra;* Tsurtön Wangé of Dol was meditating on Ejection; Metön Tsönpo of Tsangrong was meditating on Luminosity; and I was meditating on yogic heat. Thus he knew which dharma transmission lineage and activity was suitable for each one of us. To lama Ngokpa he gave the heart-instructions on the method of explaining the tantras from the perspective of the six parameters and the four modes,[14] strung together like pearls, as well as Nāropa's six ornaments, his ruby rosary, a pair of ritual ladles for making burnt offerings, and an Indian commentarial text. Then he said, "Benefit beings by explaining the dharma."

To Tsurtön Wangé of Dol he gave teachings on Ejection, likened to a bird flying though an open skylight, as well as Nāropa's hair, fingernails, nectar pills, and a ritual crown of the five buddha families. Then he said, "Train in the practice of Ejection."

To Metön Tsönpo of Tsangrong he gave instructions on Luminosity, likened to a burning lamp that dispels darkness, as well as Nāropa's vajra, bell, hand drum, and skull cup lined

with mother-of-pearl. Then he said, "Sever your ties during the intermediate state."

To me he gave the exceptional instructions on yogic heat, likened to fire burning a pile of kindling, together with Maitrīpa's hat and Nāropa's garments. Then he said, "Wander among rocky mountain ranges and the snows, and gain experience in the view and in meditation."

All the assembled resident disciples then performed a ritual feast, and from the head of the row Marpa said, "I have given you oral instructions in accordance with the omens I have observed. Similarly, my disciple lineages will each maintain their own oral instructions as the principal means for bringing about great benefit and carrying out vast enlightened activity. My son Darma Dodé is no longer present. I have entrusted to you my lineage of oral instructions and blessings that stems from our Kagyu forefathers. Therefore, apply yourselves and beings will further benefit."

The senior disciples then departed, each to his own religious seat. To me the lama said, "As for you, stay with me a few years. I have special initiations and oral instructions yet to impart. You will need to consolidate your experience and realization in the presence of the lama. Therefore remain in strict retreat."

I withdrew to Zangpuk, a cave prophesied by Nāropa. The lama and lady both treated me with great affection, sending a share of food from each of the ritual feast offerings they performed.

Thus Milarepa spoke.

This was the fourth of the supreme deeds, the deed in which the sprouts of experience and realization emerged through meditating in the presence of his lama.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Again, Rechungpa asked, "What circumstances led the Jetsün to leave lama Marpa? Marpa asked you to live with him for several years. How long did you stay?"

The Jetsün replied:

I did not stay there many years. Circumstances led me to return home. In retreat, my spiritual practice proceeded well. Normally, I did not sleep, but at dawn one morning I fell asleep and had the following dream. I arrived at my village of Kyangatsa and found my house Kazhi Dunggyé cracked like the ear of an old donkey. Of the valuables inside, leaking water had damaged the sacred scriptures of the *Ratnakūṭa*. Of the fields outside, Orma Triangle was overgrown with weeds. Of my family, my elderly mother was dead and my sister had gone off wandering as a beggar. Because my relatives rose up as enemies against us, mother and son were separated in misery while I was still young, and we never met again. This filled me with immeasurable sorrow. I called out the names of my mother and sister and wept. When I awoke my pillow was damp with tears.

Thinking this over brought my mother to mind. I shed many tears and resolved to do whatever I could to see my old mother again. Day broke. I tore down the door of my cell and went to see the lama. He was asleep when I arrived. Standing by his pillow, and assuming a humble attitude in body and speech, I made the following petition:

> Lord, Akṣobhya in essence, compassionate one,
> Please let this beggar return to his homeland one time.

In the region of Korön in Ngantsa,
Mother and children, whose kinsmen rose up as enemies,
Split up from each other, many years have gone by.
Now wrapped up in their memory I can bear it no more.
Please let me go meet them just this once.
Then I will swiftly return.

The lama awoke. At that moment, with the sun rising over the house, rays of light shone through a window by his pillow and fell upon his head. At the same time the lama's wife entered bringing his meal. The lama said, "Son, why have you suddenly broken your strict retreat and come here? You run the risk of encountering demons and obstacles. Go back right away and stay in retreat!"

Once more I described my dream and offered the following request:

Lord, Akṣobhya in essence, compassionate one,
Please let this beggar return to his homeland one time.
In the region of Korön in Kyangatsa
Nothing of value remains,
Yet these are what have me so wrapped up in thought:

To see if my house Kazhi Dunggyé
Is now collapsed or not collapsed;

To see if the sacred *Ratnakūṭa* scriptures
Are now damaged by leaking water;

To see if the fertile field Orma Triangle
Is now overgrown with weeds;

To see if the mortal frame of my old mother's body
Is now in good health;

To see if my sister Peta Gönkyi
Is now wandering or not wandering;

To see if Dzesé, betrothed through karma,
Has now made a home of her own;

To see if my uncle and neighbor Yungyal
Is now there or not there;

To see if my aunt Dümo Takdren
Is now dead or not dead;

To see if our priest Könchok Lhabum
Is living there or not living there;

Above all, my mother who gave birth to me, body and mind,
Thinking of her I can't bear it.

Please let me visit my homeland just once.
Then I shall swiftly return.

The lama replied, "Son, when you first came to me you declared that you had no use for thoughts of home or family. Now you have many. Even if you return home, it will be difficult to meet your mother, and I do not know if you will easily find the others. You spent several years in the region of Ü Tsang and many years here as well. If you wish to go, I shall grant you permission. But if you are counting on returning later, your coming here to make this request and finding me asleep is an omen that we, father and son, shall not meet again in this life. However, the sun rising over the house is an omen that you shall illuminate the Buddha's teachings like the sun. In particular, the sunlight shining upon my head is an omen that the teachings of the Practice Lineage shall flourish and spread. Dakmema bringing food offerings is an omen that you shall be sustained with the food of concentration. Now there is nothing for me to do but to let you go. Dakmema, prepare a fine offering."

The lama set up a mandala and the lady laid out the offerings. Then the lama bestowed in full the ripening path symbolic

initiations of the *ḍākinī* aural transmission and the liberating path oral instructions—a transmission handed down through a line of single individuals and not known to others.

The lama said, "Very well now. Lord Nāropa gave me the prophetic command that I should bestow upon you these oral instructions. Thus I have done so. You too must transmit them to a single disciple, who will be prophesied by the *ḍākinīs,* with the seal that it be handed down through a line of single individuals for thirteen generations. Furthermore, should you give away these instructions for food, wealth, or enjoyments of this life, you will incur the punishment of the *ḍākinīs*. Therefore, practice while strictly adhering to these commands. When a fortunate disciple appears, even if he lacks material offerings, accept him by imparting the oral instructions and in doing so spread the teachings. Attempting to break him down as Tilopa did to Lord Nāropa, or as I did to you, will be of no benefit to those of less capacity, so set aside that style of teaching dharma.

"In India there are supplementary teachings to these transmissions that carry looser restrictions—these are the Nine Dharma Cycles of the Formless *Ḍākinīs*. Of these I have given you four. For the five that remain, someone of my lineage should go request them from the descendants of Nāropa and bring them back. This will benefit sentient beings, so you should receive as many of them as you can.

"If you think, 'Perhaps I have not received the oral instructions in full because I lacked material offerings,' understand that I have no interest in material offerings. It is the offering of your accomplishment and your perseverance that bring me happiness. Therefore, persevere and raise the victory banner of your accomplishment.

"From among Lord Nāropa's oral instructions there are the oral instructions of the *ḍākinī* aural transmission that my other principal disciples have not received. I have given them to you in full as though filling a vase to the brim."

Then taking his chosen deity as a witness, the lama swore, "My words are not false and there is nothing to add to or take away from my oral instructions." Then he sang this song:

Namo. To the compassionate one I address my prayer.
Contemplating the lives of past masters endowed with compassion
Is itself the very oral instructions.
Hoping to accumulate many is cause for distraction.
Keep in your heart the essential instructions.

Much this and that without the essential
Is like many trees but no fruit.
They may have their merits but they are not the ultimate.
Studying them is not seeing the truth.
They have much to explain but have nothing of profit.
Take to heart that which profits—a treasure sublime.
If it's wealth you desire, concentrate upon this.
Dharma is the path of means for taming afflictions.
If a safe path you'd keep, concentrate upon this.
A resolute mind is a master of contentment.
If it's a fine master you wish for, concentrate upon this.
Give up the whining and sloth of life's round.

A rock crag with no one around is your father's house;
A friendless and lonely abode, the deity's home.
Mind riding mind is a tireless steed;
Your body, a wilderness hermitage, a temple.
Unwavering virtue is the best of all medicines.

To the one endowed with a meaningful life
I gave oral instructions lacking nothing of value.

Me, my instructions, and you yourself,
These three I place in the hands of my son.
And thus without rotting, scattering, or withering,
May the leaves of their fruit blossom forth.

After he sang this, he placed his hands on my head and said, "Son, your departure breaks my heart. All composite things are similarly marked by impermanence and there is nothing to do about it. Nevertheless, stay for a few days. Reflect on the oral instructions and resolve your doubts."

And so in accordance with the lama's command, I stayed a few days and resolved my misinterpretations of the oral instructions. Then the lama said, "Dakmema, prepare a ritual feast and fine offerings. Mila is now ready to depart so I will bid him farewell."

The lady prepared fine offerings for the lama and chosen deities, ritual cakes for the *ḍākinīs* and dharma protectors, and a ritual feast for the vajra brothers. Seated at the head of the assembly row, the lama revealed his body in numerous forms: the bodies of chosen deities such as Hevajra, Cakrasaṃvara, and Guhyasamāja; hand implements such as a vajra and bell, a wheel, a jewel, a lotus, and a sword; seed syllables such as the letters *oṃ, āḥ,* and *hūṃ* in white, red, and blue; and visible and invisible spheres of light. "These," he said, "are called miraculous transformations of the body. Revealing them casually serves little purpose. I have displayed them now on the occasion of Milarepa's departure."

I saw the lama in truth as a buddha and was filled with unimaginable joy. I thought that I too should attain the power of such miraculous transformations through meditation.

"Have you seen? Do you believe?" asked the lama.

"I have seen," I replied. "And I am powerless but to believe. I thought that I too should attain feats such as these through meditation."

"Son, if that is so then you may go. I have introduced you to the truth that phenomena are like an illusion, so you should practice accordingly. Seek out retreat sites in the mountains, the snows, and the forest. Among the mountain retreats there is Gyalgi Śrī in Latö, a mountain blessed by the great adepts of India. Go there and meditate. There is Gang Tisé, which is the site Himālaya prophesied by the Buddha and the palace of Cakrasaṃvara. Go there and meditate. There is Lapchi Gangra, which is Godāvarī, one of the twenty-four sacred lands. Go there and meditate. There are Riwo Pelbar of Mangyul and Yolmo Gangra in Nepal, the site prophesied in the *Avataṃsaka Sutra*. Go there and meditate. There is Chubar of Drin, dwelling place of the *ḍākinīs* who protect the region. Go there and meditate. Meditate as well in any other

uninhabited location where conditions are favorable, and raise the victory banner of practice. Together in the east lie the great sacred sites of Devīkoṭa and Tsari. It is not, at present, the time to open them. In the future your spiritual descendants will establish themselves there.

"You should principally devote yourself to meditating in these sacred sites that have been foretold. If you are able to practice, that itself will serve the lama, repay your parents' kindness, and accomplish the aims of sentient beings. If you are unable to practice, you will have nothing but a long life filled with increasingly evil deeds. Therefore, reject completely the desires of this life and do not speak to those who seek out the aims of this life. In this way you should earnestly devote yourself to practice."

Tears ran down his face as he continued, "Son, after today father and son will not meet again in this life. I will not forget you. You must not forget me. In that way, we shall without a doubt meet again in the pure celestial realms, so rejoice. At some point an obstacle will arise in your practice with the channels and subtle winds. When that happens, look at this, but not before then." The lama then handed me a scroll, rolled up and affixed with a seal.

The lama's pronouncements at that time benefited me greatly and made a lasting impression on my mind. Later on, simply remembering each of the things he said increased the strength of my spiritual practice.

Then the lama said, "Dakmema, Mila Dorjé Gyaltsen is preparing to depart in the morning. Although it will sadden me, I must go see him off."

To me he said, "Sleep near me tonight. Father and son will talk." So I slept near the lama, and when the lady arrived she broke down and wept, expressing great sadness.

The lama said, "Dakmema, why do you weep? He has received the profound instructions of the aural transmission and is going off to meditate in mountain retreats. What need is there for tears? When you consider in general how sentient beings die in misery unaware they are buddhas, and in particular how, having attained human bodies, they die without the

dharma—that is cause for tears. And if you weep for that reason, you should never stop weeping."

"That is all true," replied the lady. "But it is difficult to feel such compassion all the time. The son I bore, who had a broad understanding of both life's round and transcendence and who would have accomplished the aims of both himself and others, has been separated from us by death. Now this son—endowed with faith, diligence, wisdom, and compassion, and who did whatever he was told without fault—will be separated from us while still alive. This is why I can't bear my grief." With this she sobbed even more. I choked up with tears and the lama cried too. Master and disciple were so preoccupied by thoughts about each other that their spirits sank and they wept. There was little conversation that night.

Morning broke and the master, together with some thirteen disciples, accompanied me for a half day's journey, bringing with them excellent provisions. As they walked along the way, they all showed their affection through body, speech, and mind, expressing their sadness, engaging in heartfelt conversation, and making many warm gestures. Then, atop a mountain pass called Chölagang commanding a clear view in every direction, we performed a fine ritual feast.

Seated at the head of the row, the lama took my hand in his and said, "Son, now that you are traveling to Ü and Tsang, throughout these lands, at Silma Pass in Tsang and elsewhere, there's the serious danger of encountering bandits. I had thought of sending you off with a trustworthy companion, but the time has come for you to go alone. In the meantime, I have petitioned the lamas and chosen deities, and have commissioned the *ḍākinīs* and dharma protectors, so that my son's path will be free of obstacles. It is also important that you take great care in your own conduct. From here go to see lama Ngok. Compare your understanding of the oral instructions and take note of any differences you have. After that, depart quickly and do not stay more than seven days in your homeland. Then set out directly to practice in mountain retreat. This is for the benefit of yourself and all others."

Then I offered this song of heading up to Tsang:

Lord Akṣobhya in essence, Vajradhara,
This beggar is going just once up to Tsang.

Going home just once, this servant of yours,
Through the kindness of lama and lord,
Shall be met by the twelve Tenma spirits,
Atop Silma Pass in Tsang.
To the lord, full of blessings, I address my prayers.

For support I rely on the triple jewels.
For escorts I have *ḍākinīs* of the three places.
I go accompanied with the companion of awakening mind.
I have the eight classes of gods and demons to greet me.
I have no fear of hostile foes.

Even so, I beg of you these requests:
I beg you, send me off and receive me in this life and others.
I beg you, ward off obstructing conditions.
I beg you, protect my body, my speech, and my mind.
I beg you, give my prayers your steadfast attention.
I beg you, grant the initiation of compassion's power.
I beg you, grant the supports of tantra, scripture, and heart-instructions.
I beg you, grant the good fortune of long life without illness.

You know this beggar's sorrow and joy.
Bless me to maintain a mountain retreat.

The lama replied, "Son, it is so. Keep in mind and do not forget this final heartfelt advice your old father will tell you." He placed his hand upon my head and sang this song:

I pay homage to the lord lamas.

Son, whose fortune accords with the dharma,
May you gain the buddhahood, the reality body.

May your speech, vajra recitation, through its nectar-like flavor
Achieve the dependent arising enjoyment body.

Upon your mind's root and enlightenment's trunk,
May the leaves of the emanation body unfold.

May the lama's sayings and vajra speech
Abide in your heart unforgotten.

May the blessings of chosen deities and *ḍākinīs*
Abide in your life's very essence.

May the supporting protectors and guardians of dharma
Protect you, never leaving your side.

May these prayers of profound interconnections
Be fulfilled with all possible speed.

May the compassion of all dharma practitioners
Embrace you through all the three times.

Atop Silma Pass in Tsang
You'll find the greeting of the twelve Tenma goddesses.

Tomorrow along the road that you travel,
You'll find the escort of heroes and *ḍākinīs*.

Among house and fields yearned for at home
You'll find the masters, impermanence and illusion.

Among family, your sister and aunt,
You'll find the master who shatters illusion.

In the rock caves of desolate places
You'll find the trade of life's round for transcendence.

In the wilds of the persevering body
You'll find the temple where divine *sugatas* gather.

In the untainted food of ritual feasts
You'll find the nectar that pleases *ḍākinīs*.

In harnessing the centers of yogic exercise
You'll find the harvest where precious fruits are grown.

At home where countrymen show little respect
You'll find practice free from unforeseen distraction.

In strict retreat without human or dog
You'll find the lamp with which you'll quickly see signs.

In your rations without food gained through handouts
You'll find bliss, leftover food of the gods.

In the stainless celestial mansion of the gods
You'll find the spectacle of winning your life's aims.

In dharma divine free of all pretension
You'll find enlightened deeds of pure commitments.

In the ready fields of practicing as taught
You'll find the treasure vein of all accomplishment.

In authentic dharma, *ḍākinīs'* life and heart
You'll find the boundary of transcendence and life's round.

In the disciple line of Marpa Lotsawa
You'll find the door through which much good news will arrive.

In the persevering will of Milarepa
You'll find the backbone of the Buddha's teaching.

For the one who holds the backbone of these teachings—
May good fortune of fine lineage long remain;
May good fortune of Kagyu lamas long remain;
May good fortune of fine chosen deities long remain;
May good fortune of Cakrasaṃvara, Hevajra, and Guhyasamāja
long remain;
May good fortune of authentic dharma long remain;
May good fortune of the *ḍākinīs'* life essence long remain;

May good fortune of fine *ḍākinīs* long remain;
May good fortune of *ḍākinīs* of the three places long remain;
May good fortune of fine dharma protectors long remain;
May good fortune of Düsol Lhamo long remain;
May good fortune of fine disciples long remain;
May good fortune of practicing the lama's teachings long remain;
May good fortune of followers in the lineage long remain;
May good fortune remain stable without changing.
Practice these points without letting them go.

Having sung this, the lama expressed great joy. Then the lady presented me with fine provisions and fresh clothing and shoes, and said, "Son, these are just worldly tokens given in honor of your departure. This is the end of our relationship in this life as mother and son. May your departure be auspicious and successful. I pray that in the future we meet in the celestial realm of Oḍḍiyāna. Do not forget your mother's heartfelt words offered as a dharma farewell." She presented me with a skull cup and a vessel filled with nectar. Then the lady sang this song:

I bow at the feet of kind Marpa.
My son, persevering and steadfast,
Good-natured and long to endure,
You, child of excellent fortune—
Go now I beg, but first drink to your fill
Of the lama's draft, a wisdom elixir.
I pray that we meet in the future as friends
In a pure land united once more.

Forgetting us not, both your father and mother,
Call to us over and over in prayer.
Go now I beg, but first eat to your fill
Of the oral instructions that nourish the heart.
I pray that we meet in the future as friends
In a pure land united once more.

Forgetting us not, your kind father and mother,
Reflect on our kindness, endure in your practice.

Go now I beg, but first don the warm cloak
Of the *ḍākinīs'* breath most profound.
I pray that we meet in the future as friends
In a pure land united once more.

Forgetting not powerless sentient beings
Engage your mind on the path to enlightenment.
Go now I beg, but first shoulder the burden
Of the teachings on Great Vehicle mind generation.
I pray that we meet in the future as friends
In a pure land united once more.

So does Dakmema, the fortunate one,
Encourage her son with such heartfelt advice.
Son, do not forget this, take it to heart
And your mother too will bear you clearly in mind.
You and me, like-minded mother and son—
I pray that we meet in the future as friends
In a pure land united once more.
May this prayer be fulfilled just as I have spoken.
May you repay our kindness through turning the dharma.

The lady then shed many tears, causing everyone gathered there to weep and express sadness. As for me, I offered farewell prostrations to both father and mother, touching their feet to my head, requested blessings, and recited prayers. Then I set off walking backwards for as long as I could see the lama's face. I saw everyone in the retinue watch me with tears streaming down and I felt unable to continue.

At last, I could no longer see the lama and his wife. I continued to walk facing forward and, crossing a valley, turned to look back. The lama and retinue were a dark mass seated at the same place on the mountain pass. I felt a powerful longing to see them and wondered if I should go back. But reflecting on this, I thought, "I have received the oral instructions in their entirety. Never again shall I commit deeds that are not in accord with the dharma. I will meditate with the lama above the crown of my head and thus never be separated from him. I also

have his solemn promise that, in the future, we shall meet in a pure land. Once I have met with the mother who gave birth to me, body and mind, just for a brief moment, I will again return to see the lama."

With my mind set at ease, I set out along the trail and reached the house of lama Ngokpa. We compared our understanding of the oral instructions. In explaining the tantras, he surpassed me, and in their practice I was not far behind. But in the special *ḍākinī* aural transmission, I surpassed him. I paid my respects and offered prayers. Then I set off for my homeland, arriving there in three days. I was delighted to find that I had quite a capacity for controlling the subtle winds.[15]

Thus Milarepa spoke.

This was the fifth of the supreme deeds, the deed in which he mastered the general oral instructions and then, compelled by symbolic acts within a dream, he obtained tantric instructions and departed from the lama and returned home.

CHAPTER NINE

Again Rechungpa asked, "When the Jetsün lama returned to the land of his birth was it as he had dreamed or did he meet his mother?"

"I did not have the fortune to meet with my mother, just as I had seen in my terrible dream," answered Milarepa.

Rechungpa then said, "In that case, how did the Jetsün arrive at his home? How did he meet with his countrymen when he first arrived?"

Milarepa continued:

When I first arrived in the upper end of the valley, at a spot where I could see my house, there were many herdsmen. I asked them the names of the local places and what the locals were like. They answered in detail. Then I pointed to my house and asked, "What is that place called? What do they say about the people who live there?"

"That down there is called Kazhi Dunggyé. It has no one but ghosts for residents."

Pressing for details, I asked, "Are the people who used to live there dead or have they left the village?"

"At one time, they were among the wealthy people in the region. Then the father, who had just one son, died prematurely and without properly arranging his last will and testament. After the father's death, paternal relatives seized all of his only son's wealth. They were supposed to return it after the son grew up, but refused. Out of revenge, he cast magic and hailstorms, and the region was devastated. Now all of us fear his dharma protectors and we don't dare even to glance in the direction of his house and fields, much less go near them. By

that account, the corpse of the only son's mother lies in the house down there, and her ghost still haunts the place. There is a sister who left her mother's corpse and became a beggar, no one knows where. The son himself may now be dead; there's been no news about him at all. It is said that some dharma texts remain in the house down there. Yogin, if you dare go, you should have a look."

"How much time has passed since this happened?"

"Some eight years have passed since she died. Only distant memories of the magic and hail remain. I merely heard about it from others."

I thought that, since they feared my dharma protectors, they would not be able to harm me. I felt certain that my old mother had died and my sister had gone missing. Filled with sorrow, I sat weeping in a hidden spot until the sun went down. When the sun had set I went into the village. Just as in my dream, the fields outside were overrun with weeds and the house, once like a temple, had buckled. Stepping inside, I saw the texts of the precious *Ratnakūṭa Sutra* damaged by leaking water and falling debris. Birds and mice had made nests in them, covering the books in their droppings. I looked at this scene and took it in, and I was filled with sadness.

Then I walked across the doorstep and found a heap of rags caked with dirt over which many weeds had grown. When I gathered them up, a number of human bones, bleached white, slipped out. When I realized they were the bones of my mother, I was so overcome with grief that I could hardly stand it. I could not think, I could not speak, and an overwhelming sense of longing and sadness swept over me. I was on the verge of fainting. But at that moment I remembered my lama's oral instructions. I then blended my mother's consciousness with my mind and the wisdom mind of the Kagyu lamas. I made a cushion of my mother's bones and rested in a state of luminosity without letting my three gates waver for even an instant. I saw the true possibility of liberating both my mother and my father from the suffering of life's round.

Seven days passed and, emerging from my absorption, I thought things over: "I am convinced that all of life's round is

ithout essence. Thus I shall make figurines from my mother's ones.[16] As payment for that, I shall make an offering of these *atnakūṭa* texts and then I shall practice at Drakar Taso day nd night without regard for my life. If the eight worldly conerns arise in my mind I shall kill myself. If thoughts of a comortable life come up, may the *ḍākinīs* and dharma protectors rike me down." I repeated this pledge over and over in my ind.

I gathered my mother's bones. Then I took good care of the *atnakūṭa* texts, clearing them of dirt and bird droppings. They ere not too damaged by leaking water and the letters were ill clear and bright. I loaded the first portion of the texts onto y back and carried my mother's bones in the fold of my cloak. eeling immeasurable weariness toward the world, I became rtain that life's round had no essence. Thus I sang this song of y fervent pledge to carry out the essence of dharma:

Lord Akṣobhya in essence, compassionate one,
Translator Marpa, in accord with your prophetic command,
In my homeland, a prison of demons,
Masters, impermanence and illusion, appeared.
Bless me to maintain certainty
In these excellent masters themselves.

In general, all things that exist or appear
Are impermanent, unstable, they change and they move.
In particular, the things of life's round have no essence.
Rather than do things that lack any essence,
I go to do dharma divine, that's essential.

First when there was a father there was no son.
Now when there is a son there is no father.
Though the two come together they've no essence.
I the son will do dharma divine, that's essential.
I'm off to meditate at Drakar Taso.

When there was a mother there was no son.
Before I the son came, the old mother had died.

Though the two come together they've no essence.
I the son will do dharma divine, that's essential.
I'm off to meditate at Drakar Taso.

When there was a sister there was no brother.
When the brother arrives, the sister is gone.
Though the two come together they've no essence.
I the son will do dharma divine, that's essential.
I'm off to meditate at Drakar Taso.

When there were holy texts there was no one to tend them.
When the attendant arrives they are damaged by rain.
Though the two come together they've no essence.
I the son will do dharma divine, that's essential.
I'm off to meditate at Drakar Taso.

When there was a house there was no master.
When the master arrives the house is in ruins.
Though the two come together they've no essence.
I the son will do dharma divine, that's essential.
I'm off to meditate at Drakar Taso.

When there were fertile fields there was no owner.
Now the owner arrives they're run over with weeds.
Though the two come together they've no essence.
I the son will do dharma divine, that's essential.
I'm off to meditate at Drakar Taso.

Homeland, house, fields, and the like,
The things of life's round have no essence at all.
Those beings who want things with no essence can have them.
A yogi, I go to achieve liberation.

Kind father Marpa Lotsawa
Bless your son to remain in mountain retreat.

After I had sung a song of my sadness, I first went to the home of the tutor who taught me to read. He had died, so I

presented the first portion of the *Ratnakūṭa* text to his son and said, "I will give you the rest of this religious text. Make figurines from the bones of my old mother."

"Your dharma protectors will follow this book so I don't want it, but I will help you mold the figurines," he replied.

"My protectors will not follow the offerings I make."

"In that case," he said, "it's fine."

With my help, he fashioned the figurines out of my mother's bones and performed the consecration ritual. Then we placed them in a stupa and I prepared to leave.

My tutor's son said, "I will serve you in any way I can, so stay here a few days and talk."

I replied, "I have no time to talk. I am eager to practice."

"Well then, stay tonight. In the morning I shall give you provisions for your practice." I stayed.

He continued, "In the past when you were young, you vanquished your enemies through magic. Now that you are in the prime of your life, you practice the pure dharma—that's amazing. In the future you will become an accomplished master. What sort of lama do you have and what kind of oral instructions did you receive?" He questioned me in detail.

I described how I obtained the Great Perfection and, in particular, how I met Marpa. "How amazing. If that is true, you should repair the house, marry Dzesé, and then emulate the life of your lama."

"Lama Marpa took a wife for the benefit of beings. I have neither the intention nor the ability to act in that way. To do so would be like a rabbit bounding along in the guise of a lion, it would fall into an abyss and surely die. Broadly speaking, I've become weary of life's round and I have an urgent desire for nothing but the lama's oral instructions and for practice. That I practice in mountain retreat is the very core of the lama's advice. Only in this way can I emulate his life. Through practice I will surely fulfill his wishes. Through practice, I will benefit the teachings and sentient beings. Through practice, my parents will be rescued. Through practice, my own aims will also be realized. I know nothing but practice, I am good for nothing but practice, I think about nothing but practice.

"In particular, witnessing the remains of my parents' estate and the wealth they amassed has given me a fierce intention to practice. I am burning like fire inside. For others, untouched by such misfortune or oblivious to the suffering of death and bad rebirth, a comfortable life is enough. These conditions compel me to practice without regard for food, clothing, or recognition."

Bursting into tears, I sang this song to illustrate these points:

I bow down at the feet of most excellent Marpa.
Bless this beggar to turn away from clinging to things.

Alas, alas. Ay me, ay me. How sad!
People invested in things of life's round—
I reflect and reflect and again and again I despair.
They act and they act and stir up from their depths so much torment.
They spin and they spin and are cast in the depths of life's round.

Those dragged on by karma, afflicted with anguish like this—
What to do? What to do? There's no cure but the dharma.
Lord Akṣobhya in essence, Vajradhara,
Bless this beggar to stay in mountain retreat.

In the town of impermanence and illusion
A restless visitor to these ruins is afflicted with anguish.
In the environs of Gungtang, a wondrous landscape,
Grasslands that fed yaks, sheep, cattle, and goats
Are nowadays taken over by harmful spirits.
These too are examples of impermanence and illusion,
Examples that call me, a yogin, to practice.

This home of four pillars and eight beams
Nowadays resembles a lion's upper jaw.
The manor of four corners, four walls, and a roof, making nine
These too are examples of impermanence and illusion,
Examples that call me, a yogin, to practice.

This fertile field Orma Triangle
Nowadays is a tangle of weeds.
My cousins and family relations
Nowadays rise up as an army of foes.
These too are examples of impermanence and illusion,
Examples that call me, a yogin, to practice.

My good father Mila Shergyal
Nowadays, of him no trace remains.
My mother Nyangtsa Kargyen
Nowadays is a pile of bare bones.
These too are examples of impermanence and illusion,
Examples that call me, a yogin, to practice.

My family priest Könchok Lhabum
Nowadays works as a servant.
The sacred text *Ratnakūṭa*
Nowadays serves as a nest for vermin and birds.
These too are examples of impermanence and illusion,
Examples that call me, a yogin, to practice.

My neighboring uncle Yungyal
Nowadays lives among hostile enemies.
My sister Peta Gönkyi
Has vanished without a trace.
These too are examples of impermanence and illusion
Examples that call me, a yogin, to practice.

Lord Akṣobhya in essence, compassionate one,
Bless this beggar to stay in mountain retreat.

I sang this sad melody of my weariness with the world. The son sighed deeply and said, "How amazing. That is so very true." His wife was present and she too sat there with tears streaming from her eyes. Seeing the condition of my home, I couldn't help but honestly affirm again and again my pledge to

practice. I also kept that pledge continually in mind. Since in reality I fulfilled that pledge, I have no regrets.

Thus Milarepa spoke.

This was the sixth of the supreme deeds, the deed in which, having been reminded once again of the essencelessness of life's round, he vowed to practice.

CHAPTER TEN

Then Rechungpa asked, "Where did the Jetsün first practice austerities and meditation?"

Milarepa continued:

In the morning my tutor's son said, "Make use of these retreat provisions and remember us in your spiritual practice."

He gave me a sack filled with barley flour and some excellent dried meat, butter, and cheese. I then withdrew to a good cave on a ridge behind my house and stayed there in meditation. As I was sparing with my provisions and water, my body weakened but my practice improved and I was able to remain there for several months. Then, when my provisions ran out and I had nothing to eat, I felt I could not last any longer. I thought, "I should beg for meat, butter, and cheese from highland nomads and barley flour from lowland farmers. With continued sustenance I could go on practicing."

I went to beg from the nomads. At the entrance to a tent I called out, "Some alms of meat, butter, and cheese for a yogin, I beg." I had happened upon the tent of my aunt. She recognized me and, in her displeasure, immediately set loose her dog. I defended myself with stones and a staff. Then my aunt seized a tent pole and beat me repeatedly, shouting, "Disgrace to your noble father! Dishonor to your family! Demon who devastated your homeland! Why have you come? A son like you born to such a fine father!"

I turned to flee but, malnourished and weak, I stumbled on a rock and fell into a pool of water. I nearly died while my aunt continued to rage. I got up as best I could and, leaning on my staff, sang this song to my aunt:

I bow at the feet of the kind father Marpa.

In the region of Korön in Ngantsa
Mother and children were tormented by kin, and
We three were scattered like beans with a stick.
Know, aunt and uncle, it was you who scattered us.

A beggar, I wandered the ends of the earth, while
By torment and poverty's blade my poor mother died;
My sister went off to beg clothing and food.

With undying love for my mother and sister,
Once more I returned to my homeland, a prison—
I saw then the mother I loved gone forever,
My sister in misery roaming around everywhere.

A sorrowful anguish rose up inside me.
You relatives plotted and planned, did you not,
The suffering of mother and children, us three?

And yet this intolerable torment and suffering
Has prompted the practice of authentic dharma.
While high in the mountains with no one to lean on
Practicing oral instructions of Marpa the Kind,
With nothing to eat for this heap of illusory body,
Thus did I come around begging for alms.

Like a dying bug drawn to the hole of an anthill,
Just so I arrived at the step of my aunt.
She set loose a ferocious dog as an envoy.
With a weakened body I fended him off.
Your insults and curses, abusive words,
Filled me with grief like a spike in my heart.

Using a pole from the tent as a weapon
You battered my body in torment and pain,
And almost deprived me of my precious life.
Although I have reason to be filled with anger

Instead I will obey my lama's command.
O aunt, without letting your anger run wild,
Give me provisions to use in retreat.

Sovereign of love and compassion, Lord Marpa,
Bless your subject to assuage his anger.

I sang this song in a voice choked with tears. A girl who was standing behind my aunt broke into long sobs and even my aunt felt ashamed. They both went inside and the girl returned carrying a ball of butter and a half-brick of compacted sweet cake that had spoiled. I begged at the other tents where I did not know anyone. But once they realized it was me, the occupants each stared intently and gave liberal alms. I left carrying their offerings with me. I knew from my aunt's reaction what my uncle would do, so I thought I must avoid him. But while begging alms from the farmers in the upper valley of Tsa, I arrived at the door of his newly relocated house.

He recognized me and said, "Though I am old like a corpse, you are just who I wanted to see." He flung a deadly stone, nearly hitting me. Then I too recognized him and turned to escape, but he mustered his strength and threw all the stones within reach. As I fled, he came out carrying a bow and arrows shouting, "Traitor! Disgrace! Didn't you destroy this land? Countrymen, we have our enemy in our hands. Come out quickly." With this, he began shooting arrows at me, and taking his lead, young men from the region threw stones. I was afraid that my remorse for having once cast black magic would not placate them. So I decided to threaten them with magic.

"Father Kagyu lamas," I called out, "ocean of oath-bound blood drinkers. This yogin, a dharma practitioner, is beset by enemies. Come to my rescue. Though I may die, my dharma protectors are immortal."

Terrified, they all seized my uncle. Those who sympathized with me intervened on my behalf and those who had thrown stones begged forgiveness. My uncle refused to give me anything, but the other countrymen each handed out liberal alms,

which I carried off. Thinking I would provoke their anger if I stayed in the region, I decided to leave. But that night I had a dream indicating that it would be good to stay a few days in my former location. As I had lingered a few days, Dzesé learned of my presence and came to see me carrying some excellent food and beer. She embraced me and then sat there sobbing. She explained how my mother had died and my sister had gone wandering, which filled me with great sadness. Then I too shed many tears.

"Why haven't you married after all this time?" I asked her.

She replied, "People were afraid of your dharma protectors, and no man came forward to say he would have me. Even if someone had, I wouldn't have gone. That you practice dharma is most amazing. Now what will you do with your house and fields?"

Understanding her intentions, I thought, "Through the kindness of Marpa the Translator I did not get mired in married life. From the point of view of dharma, it's enough to offer good prayers. But from a worldly point of view, I should say something to put her mind at ease."

I said, "If you see my sister, give them to her. In the meantime, use the fields yourself. If you find out for sure that my sister is dead, you may take both house and fields."

"You don't need them for yourself?" she asked.

"I practice austerities and seek food as do birds and mice, so I have no need for fields. I dwell in caves in uninhabited places, so I have no need for a house. Even if I were a master of the entire world, I would still need to leave them aside at the time of death. So if I renounce these things now, I shall find happiness in this and all future lives. Doing so, my conduct is contrary to that of all other men, so you can say I am no longer a man."

"So is your conduct also contrary to all those who practice dharma?" she asked.

"There are those who once fell prey to worldly pride and then, having learned to preach on a few religious books, took pleasure in their own gains and in the defeat of others. Such people call themselves dharma practitioners and wear golden

robes, all the while seeking as much wealth and fame as possible. I turn my back on all such people and always will. But there are other dharma practitioners whose intentions and actions are not like that. Even though they appear in the garb of their own tradition, I don't view their actions as being contrary to mine since we agree in our fundamental aims. But if they do not agree with my fundamental aims then they are opposed to my practice."

"Never before have I seen a dharma practitioner like you, dressed more miserably than a beggar. What kind of religious tradition requires dress like this?"

"It is the garb of the best of all religious traditions, the tradition called 'casting the eight worldly concerns to the wind in order to attain buddhahood in this life.'"

She replied, "As you say, your practice and manner of dress and theirs are exactly the opposite. It seems one of them is not the dharma. Were they equally dharma, I would still prefer theirs."

"I don't like the kind of dharma practitioners you worldly people favor. It seems that even those practitioners who wear saffron robes, while in agreement with my fundamental aims, still retain a slight affinity for the eight worldly concerns. Even if they do not, there is still an unimaginable difference in the speed at which we can each attain buddhahood. This is what you don't understand. Therefore, practice the dharma if you can. If you can't, then take the house and fields as I have already said and be off."

"I want neither your house nor your fields," she replied. "Give them to your sister. I shall practice dharma but I cannot follow a path like yours." And with this she departed.

My aunt then learned that I had no interest in either the house or the fields. Several days passed and she thought, "Since he says he is following the instructions of his lama, I shall see if I can acquire the fields for myself." She visited me carrying beer, meat, butter, and other foods and said, "The other day I behaved foolishly, but you, my nephew, are a dharma practitioner, so you should forgive me. Now your aunt will sow your fields and bring you provisions."

"Very well," I replied, "in that case, my aunt, sow the fields and bring one load of barley flour each month. Keep the rest for yourself."

"I will do that," she said. For some two months, she brought barley flour as agreed. Then one day my aunt appeared and said, "People say that if I plow the fields, my nephew will cast magic with his dharma protectors. But you won't really cast magic, will you?"

"Why would I cast magic? Since it will be virtuous work, sow the fields and bring me provisions."

"Well then, if it makes no difference to you, it would ease my mind if you'd swear an oath."

I didn't know what she intended with this, but I thought that making people happy is dharma, so I swore an oath. This pleased her and she returned home.

I then persevered in meditation but was unable to achieve the slightest quality of bliss-warmth. One night, while I was wondering what to do next, I had the following dream: I was plowing an uncultivated field but the earth was hard and I could not furrow through it. I wondered if I should give up. Just then Jetsün Marpa appeared in the sky and said, "Son, plow with diligence and perseverance. Though the earth is hard and uncultivated, you shall furrow through it." Thus Marpa guided me and I plowed the field, creating deep furrows. Excellent crops then sprang up.

I awoke filled with joy but thought, "If even fools don't cling to dreams, which are the mistaken projections of mental imprints, then I am even more foolish than fools themselves." Nevertheless I took this as a sign that good qualities would emerge if I persevered in meditation. Pleased, I sang this song explaining the meaning of my dream:

> To the lord most kind I address my prayer.
> Bless this beggar to stay in mountain retreat.
>
> Upon the ground, the field of equanimity,
> I mix in water and manure of stable faith in the path.

I sow the seeds of pure, untainted mind.
The thunder of my supplications claps
And an effortless rain of blessings descends.
Upon the oxen of mind free from doubt
I fix the yoke of method and wisdom's plow.
A farmhand lacking confused and muddled thoughts,
I firmly grasp the plow-arm undistracted.
With the whip of diligent exertion
I till the hardened soil of five poisonous afflictions.
I clear away stones of unwholesome character
And pull up weeds without pretense.
From ripened ears, the truth of actions and results,
I reap the harvest, a superb life of liberation.
With the fruit of excellent oral instructions
I fill the granary lacking conceptual focus.
Roasted and ground, such sublime food of *ḍākinīs*
Is nourishment for this yogin's practice.

This is an explanation of my dream's meaning.
The deepest meaning will not surface in words,
Nor realization through mere illustration.
Hereafter, those who practice for enlightenment
I urge you to meditate with perseverance.
Arousing fortitude and perseverance,
If you practice hardship, you'll also gain the rare.
May those who practice dharma and seek enlightenment
Have no obstacles in their practice of the path.

After I said this, I resolved to go meditate at Drakar Taso. Around that time, my aunt appeared, bringing with her three loads of barley flour, a ragged blanket, a garment of fine cloth, and some meat mixed with butter and fat. She said, "These are the payment for your field, nephew. Please take them and go off somewhere I will neither see nor hear you. All of the villagers are saying to me, 'After the harm Töpaga inflicted in the past, you are now having dealings with him? We should kill you both before he murders the rest of our countrymen!' That

is why, my nephew, you would do well to flee to another region. In any case, there is no reason to kill me if you do not go. But understand that they will no doubt kill you."

I knew very well that the people of the region had not said any such thing. "What if I do not act in accordance with the dharma?" I thought. "Generally speaking, I have not forsworn casting magic upon those who would steal my fields. And in particular, the oath of a yogin is like a dream, an illusion, so there is nothing to stop me from casting hailstorms as soon as you turn your back. But such things I shall not do. For whom would I cultivate patience if there was no one to make me angry? Were I to die this very night, what would I do with my fields and these things? It is taught that patience is the best means for attaining buddhahood. My aunt is the support for cultivating such patience, and it is thanks to my uncle and aunt that I have met with authentic dharma. In order to repay their great kindness I shall pray that they one day attain buddhahood. For this life, it is fitting to give them not only my fields but also my house."

I explained this to my aunt and told her, "As I have no need for anything but the lama's oral instructions in order to achieve enlightenment, my aunt, take not only my fields but my house as well." Then I sang this song:

> With the lord lama's kindness, I wander in mountain retreats.
> You know this beggar's happiness and pain.
>
> The world of life's round wears you down through karma—
> Touch it and you'll sever liberation's artery.
>
> Karma of evil deeds is the harvest of human beings—
> Engage in it and you'll feel the misery of lower realms.
>
> Fondness for loved ones is a demon's stronghold—
> Build it and you'll be sucked into a pit of flames.
>
> Your hoard of food and wealth, the chattels of men—
> Whatever you own is your enemy's supply.

The tea and beer of wanting happiness is deadly poison—
Drink it and you'll sever liberation's artery.

Aunt, your counsel is filled with spiteful words—
Speak it and it will ruin both self and others.

Aunt, payment for my field is the stuff of avarice—
Take it and I'll be born a hungry ghost.

My field, my house, everything—
Take them, Aunt, and may happiness you find.

Human slander I purify with the dharma.
Divine fame I gain with sincere practice.
Demon talk I trample with compassion.
Malicious talk, I scatter to the wind.
My talk looks ever upward.

Lord most kind, Akṣobhya in essence,
Bless this beggar to stay in mountain retreat.

After I sang this song, my aunt replied, "A truly great dharma practitioner should act like you, my nephew. How wonderful!" And she departed filled with joy.

Moved by these circumstances, I was overcome by a terrible sadness. But I also felt relieved to have disposed of my house and fields, so I resolved to go meditate at Drakar Taso as I had previously vowed. As my practice of meditative equipoise had taken a firm foothold in that cave, I called it Kangtsuk Puk (Firm Foothold Cave).

In the morning, I took the payment for my fields and whatever other small items I had and, without anyone knowing, I left for Drakar Taso. There was a most pleasant cave at Taso, and that's where I stayed. I made it my abode, laying out a small, hard meditation mat, and then I vowed not to go down to the village:

> Until I have gained extraordinary experience and realization, I shall not descend from this mountain retreat to eat the crumbled

remains of food from funeral offerings even if I die of starvation;[17] I shall not descend for clothing even if I die of exposure; I shall not engage in frivolous entertainment or distractions even if I die of sadness; I shall not descend for a single dose of medicine even if I die of sickness. Without moving my body in the slightest way toward affairs of this life, I shall achieve buddhahood with my three gates undistracted. May the lamas and chosen deities bless me to fulfill these vows; may the *ḍākinīs* and dharma protectors carry out enlightened activity. Since death is preferable to having a human body that does not practice, should I act against these vows, may the ocean of oath-bound protectors cut short my life immediately upon any transgression; and may the lamas and chosen deities bless me to encounter the authentic dharma in the next life and take rebirth in a human body capable of practice.

Having taken these vows, I then sang a song of oath-binding prayers:

Lord Nāro's lineage son, path to liberation,
Bless this beggar to stay in mountain retreat.

Without diversion by the demons of worldly distraction,
May concentration of meditative equipoise increase.

Without clinging to the pool of serenity,
May the flower of insight blossom.

Without the weeds of elaboration shooting up,
May the petals of non-contrivance spread open.

Without feeling hesitation in my retreat hut,
May the fruit of experience and realization ripen.

Without the power of demons to cause obstructions,
May true conviction arise in my mind.

Without doubts appearing on the path of means,
May the son follow the father's footsteps.

Lord Akṣobhya in essence, compassionate one,
Bless this beggar to stay in mountain retreat.

With this prayer I then meditated, sustaining myself on a thin gruel made from whatever scant barley flour I had. In this way I attained some confidence about the Great Seal in my mind, but my physical strength weakened and, unable to control the subtle winds, I did not experience bliss-warmth in my body. I thus became intensely cold. I prayed to the lama one-pointedly, and one night I experienced a state of luminosity. While in that state I perceived that a host of women appeared saying lama Marpa had sent them. They performed an excellent ritual feast and said, "If Milarepa has not given rise to bliss-warmth, Marpa instructs that he exert his three gates in the following way," and they demonstrated a series of yogic exercises.

Accordingly, I sought physical well-being through the key point of an erect, squatting posture, "binding of the six hearths." I sought verbal control through the key point of controlling the life force winds, "binding of a plaited knot." I sought mental relaxation through the key point of self-liberation, "binding of a coiled snake." Meditating in this way, a most wonderful bliss-warmth spread through me.

When a year had passed, I felt a desire to go refresh myself. As I prepared to leave I suddenly remembered my earlier vows and I sang this song of scolding myself:

Lord Vajradhara with Marpa's form,
Bless this beggar to stay in mountain retreat.

You there, amazing one, Milarepa:
A song of self-counsel to help yourself.

You are separated from friends who converse with you kindly.
The valley where you seek entertainment is empty.
The region where you hope to find solace is barren.

Don't daydream, don't daydream. Rest mind in its place.
Daydream and you think of all sorts of non-virtue.

Don't waver, don't waver. Maintain stable mindfulness.
Waver and virtuous practice is tossed to the wind.

Don't go, don't go. Remain in your seat.
Go off and your stride will be tripped up on stones.

Don't slacken, don't slacken. Keep your head bowed.
Relax and it all becomes futile and meaningless.

Don't sleep, don't sleep. Practice virtuous conduct.
Sleep and afflictions, five poisons, oppress you.

After scolding myself in this way, I meditated day and night and my spiritual practice thus increased. Three years passed in this way. I had a plan to eat one load of barley flour each year. But once that was used up, I knew my life would be in danger if I had nothing else to survive on. I thought, "Worldly men find one or two tenths of an ounce of gold and they rejoice, and when they lose it, they despair. But that can't be compared to dying without attaining buddhahood. A body used to achieve buddhahood is more valuable than even the whole third-order thousand-fold universe filled with gold.[18] It is better to die while continuing to practice than to break my earlier vow. What should I do now?" I decided I would not go down to the village, but that I should search for some food to sustain my practice of austerities. Since it would be for the sake of dharma, this would not break my vows.

Stepping out in front of Drakar, I found a delightful spot with a commanding view where there was warm sun, excellent water, and many nettles growing. I moved over to it and stayed there living on nothing but nettles as I practiced. I had no clothes on my outside and nothing nutritious to sustain me inside. My body thus became like a skeleton and turned the color of nettles, covered with soft green hair. During this time I wanted to clutch the text the lama gave me and I placed it upon my head. When I did, my stomach felt pleasantly full even though I had nothing whatsoever to eat, and I even

belched. I was tempted to break the seal on the scroll and read it but I received a sign that it was not yet the proper time so I set it aside.

About a year had passed when several hunters from the market of Kyirong appeared at my dwelling, having failed to kill any game. At first they cried, "It's a ghost!" and fled. I assured them I was a man and a practitioner. "It doesn't seem like he is, but let's see," they said. The hunters returned and scoured the interior of my cave. "Where are your retreat provisions?" they demanded menacingly. "Give us some now and later we will return it in kind. If you don't, we'll kill you."

"I have nothing but nettles," I replied. "Lift this hermit up and see if he has anything. I have no fear of being robbed."

"We will not rob you. What would we gain by lifting up the hermit?"

"You will acquire merit," I said.

"In that case," they said, "lift him up." They grabbed my waist and let me fall to the floor again and again. Even as my body, accustomed to ascetic practice, was filled with pain, I felt fierce, unbearable compassion and wept.

One of the hunters, who had stood by without causing harm, said, "Hey, you all, he seems to be a genuine religious follower. And even if he's not, you don't become a man by mistreating such a bag of bones like that. He has not forced us to be hungry. Don't do that!"

Then to me he said, "Wondrous yogin, since I did not disturb you, place me under the protection of your meditation practice."

The others said, "And those of us who did lift you up, place us under your protection too."

One of the hunters added, "Sure, but he'll find a different way of protecting you." They burst out laughing and went away.

I didn't think of using magic but they eventually received the deities' retribution. It is said that the governor punished the hunters. The leader was executed and all the others, except for the individual who told them not to harm me, had their eyes put out.

After a year or so had passed, my clothes were all worn out. I thought about sewing together the ragged blanket, now in tatters, my aunt had given me as payment for my fields, the empty flour sacks, and the remnants of my clothing to make a coverlet for my cushion. But then I thought, "Were I to die tonight, sewing this would be pointless. It would be better to meditate," so I gave up the idea. Instead, I spread the blanket over the cushion and used it to wrap the lower part of my body. I dressed my upper body with each of the empty flour sacks. In this way, I used these materials to cover the parts of my body that needed it most. When they could no longer protect me, I thought my renunciation had gone too far and that I should sew them together. But I could find neither needle nor thread, so I knotted together the three ragged sacks, one each for the upper, middle, and lower parts of my body, all of which I fastened with a jute rope around my waist. I did my best wearing this by day. At night I covered the cushion with the ragged blanket and tatters of cloth and continued as best I could.

In this way I passed another year or so meditating. One day there arose a clamor of many voices. Looking out, I saw that several hunters, carrying a good deal of meat, had appeared at the entrance of my cave. Upon seeing me, those in front cried, "It's a ghost!" and fled. Those farther back said, "You needn't worry about ghosts appearing in the daylight. Take a good look. Is it still there?"

"It's still there," called the others.

Some old hunters came forward from the rear and they too became frightened. I told them my story in detail, explaining that I was not a ghost but rather was a hermit practicing meditation in the mountains, and that my body had become like this due to lack of sustenance.

"We shall see if it's true or not," they said. Entering the cave, they found nothing at all but nettles. They were filled with faith and offered me a good quantity of meat and a portion of their barley flour. "This sort of activity is truly amazing," they said. "Please guide the animals we have killed to a higher rebirth

and purify the sinful deeds we have committed." Then they paid their respects and left.

Filled with joy I thought, "Now I have food to eat like a human." I ate some of the cooked meat and my body became comfortable, my constitution clear, and my awareness heightened. Thus my spiritual practice was strengthened and a profound experience of bliss-emptiness arose as never before. I understood that the food and drink offered while practicing austerities in mountain retreat brings far greater merit than a hundred offerings made to those who carelessly pursue pleasures in the village below. I ate the meat sparingly until finally it was full of maggots. I considered picking away the maggots and then eating it but then thought, "I have neither the merit nor the right to do so. I shall not steal the maggots' share of food." I let them eat the meat and returned to my ascetic diet of nettles.

One night a man came looking for any food or belongings I might have. He scoured the entire cave but I burst out laughing and said, "See if you can find something at night in this place where I can find nothing by day." He laughed too and then went away.

About another year had passed when several hunters from Tsa who had failed to catch any game appeared. I was clothed in the three cloth sacks tied with a jute rope and resting in meditative equipoise. They prodded me with the ends of their bows and said, "Is this a man or a ghost? Judging by its looks and its garb, it is probably a ghost."

I opened my mouth and said, "I am most definitely a man."

Recognizing the gap in my teeth, they asked, "Are you Töpaga?"

"I am," I replied.

"In that case we request some food for now, which we will not fail to repay later. It was said that you once returned to the village, but that was many years ago. Have you been living here all the while since then?"

"I have indeed," I replied. "But I have nothing agreeable for you to eat."

"We will take whatever you eat. That will be enough for us."

"Very well then, build a fire and cook some nettles."

When they had built a fire and cooked some nettles they said, "Now we need some meat or fat to season it."

"If I had meat or fat my food would not have lacked nourishment, but I have not had any for years. For seasoning, use nettles."

"In that case, we need some barley flour," they said.

I replied, "If I had flour my food would not have lacked substance, but I have not had any for years. For flour, too, use nettles."

"Well then," they added, "we cannot do without salt."

I replied, "If I had salt my food would not have lacked flavor, but I have not had any for years. For salt, use nettles."

They said, "Definitely, with your food and clothing, you will never improve your appearance or regain your strength. This is not becoming of a man. Even a servant has a full belly and warm clothes. There is no one in the world more miserable or pitiful than you."

"You shouldn't say such things," I replied. "I am the most formidable of men to have obtained a human body. I have encountered the likes of Lhodrak Marpa Lotsawa. I have received the oral instructions for attaining buddhahood in one life and one body. Having renounced this life, I am meditating alone in the mountains and devoting myself to achieving this enduring aim. I have sacrificed food, clothing, and conversation and in this life I shall defeat my enemies, the mental afflictions. For this reason, there is no one in the world more courageous or high-minded than me. On the other hand, although you have been born in a land where the Buddha's teachings have spread, you have no inclination even to listen to dharma let alone practice meditation. There is no form of ruinous behavior graver than piling up sinful deeds by the handful and the sackload. This is the way to land in the deepest and most enduring hell. In the end I will certainly gain happiness and ease, but even right now, this is the sort of happiness I am assured. So listen to my song." Then I sang this Song of the Five Happinesses:

I bow at the feet of Lord Marpa most kind.
Bless me to give up concerns for this life.

In Drakar Taso Üma Dzong,
At the summit of Üma Dzong Fortress
I, the Tibetan cotton-clad yogin
Sacrificed clothing and food of this life
And then worked to become a perfected buddha.

A small rigid cushion beneath me: happiness.
A soft cotton robe around me: happiness.
A meditation belt wrapped around me: happiness.
Illusory body neither hungry nor full: happiness.
Mind that gives up examination: happiness.
I am not unhappy. Happy is what I am.

If I seem happy, so happy, do all I have done.
If you don't have the fortune to practice the dharma,
Spare me your mistaken pity.
The one who accomplishes lasting contentment
For myself and all sentient beings.

The sun's rays have set on the mountain pass,
You should return to your homes.
Life is short and death strikes without warning—
While I work to become a perfected buddha
I have no time to waste on such meaningless talk.
Therefore, in evenness now I rest.

The hunters replied, "You have said many fine things about happiness, and you certainly have a pleasing voice. But we cannot act in this manner of yours." With this, they went away.

Each year in Kyangatsa a great festival was held for casting figurines. On this occasion the hunters, in a single voice, sang the Song of the Five Happinesses. My sister Peta was begging at the festival and heard them. "Whoever spoke those words is a buddha," she cried.

One of the hunters said, "Ha-ha, she is praising her own brother."

Another added, "Whether he is a buddha or an ordinary man, this is the song of your brother who is starving to death."

Peta replied, "My father and mother died long ago. Our relatives rose up against us as enemies. My brother has wandered to the ends of the earth, and I am a beggar who will never see him again. I have no reason to be cheerful."

She began to weep and Dzesé came up to her saying, "Don't cry! It probably is your brother. I met him some time ago. Go to Drakar Taso and see if he's there. If he is, then we shall both go to meet him."

She thought this was true, so she went to Drakar Taso carrying a vessel of beer she had begged and a small container of barley porridge. Then she peered in from the cave entrance. My body was wasted by ascetic practices. My eyes were sunken into their sockets. All my bones stuck out. I was emaciated with a green complexion. Fine bristling greenish hair grew on the skin hanging from my flesh and bones. The hair on my head grew in shocks and frightful disarray. My limbs were about to break. When my sister saw this she was terrified, thinking I was a ghost at first. But the words she had heard, that her brother was starving to death, made her hesitate.

"Are you a man or a ghost?" she asked.

"I am Mila Töpaga," I replied.

Recognizing my voice, she came in and embraced me, crying, "Brother, brother." In such a state, she fainted and lay unconscious for a while. I too recognized that she was Peta and felt both happy and sad. I did my best to revive her and after a moment she regained consciousness. She placed her head between my knees, covering her face with her hands. Choking with tears she said, "Our mother died in misery while longing to see you brother. No one around us came to help, and unable to bear such intense grief in our house, I went to beg in other regions. I wondered if you were dead, my brother, or if you were not dead if you had found a measure of happiness greater than this. But such is my brother's fate, and this is what I, your sister, have become. No one on earth is more miserable than

us, brother and sister." Then she called out the names of our parents and sat there sobbing.

I repeatedly tried to console her, to no avail. So, overcome with sadness, I sang this song to my sister:

I pay homage to the lord lamas.
Bless this beggar to stay in mountain retreat.

Dear sister, a being tormented inside by life's round,
In general, all pleasure and pain are ephemeral.
But since you are feeling such pain in this way
Be certain that lasting contentment exists.
Listen, therefore, to your own brother's song.
To repay the kindness of beings, my parents,
Thus do I practice the dharma.

Look at my home, like an animal's den.
Were another to see it, he'd be stricken with grief.

Look at my food, like an animal's fodder.
Were another to see it, he'd feel sick to his stomach.

Look at my body, like a skeletal frame.
Were an enemy to see it, even he would shed tears.

Look at my conduct, like that of a madman.
My sister is filled with embarrassment.

Look at my mind, an actual buddha.
Were the Victors to see it, they'd be filled with delight.

Steadfast I kept until flesh and bone numbed,
Set on the cold stone seat beneath me.

My body is just like a nettle all through,
Turned green, and will never go back.

In a rock cave with no one around
There is no time to cure melancholy.

I am never bereft of my heartfelt longing
For my lama, the buddhas of the three times.

The force of such perseverance in meditation
Will no doubt bring experience and realization.
When experience and realization are born,
Happiness is gained on the way in this life,
And perfect complete buddhahood in the next.

Therefore Peta, my sister dear,
Without further misery and despair,
Push on for the sake of the dharma.

Peta replied, "It would be amazing if what you say were so, but it seems difficult to believe it's true. If it were true then other religious practitioners would practice in this way, at least in part, even if not exactly as you do. But I have never seen anyone involved with such misery."

I ate and drank the food and beer she gave me. Immediately my mind became crystal clear and that night my spiritual practice improved. After Peta departed the next day, I felt both physical ease and discomfort, and various kinds of virtuous and non-virtuous thoughts arose in my mind, such as I had never experienced before. When this happened, I persevered in my meditation, but to no avail.

Several days later, Dzesé came to see me, together with Peta, carrying meat, pungent butter, barley flour, and a good amount of excellent beer. I had gone to fetch water when I met them. When they saw me without clothes and completely naked, they both blushed and could not help crying. They offered me the meat, butter, and barley flour, and poured the beer. While I was drinking, Peta said, "However you look at my brother now, he cannot be called a man. You should beg for alms and eat at least some scrap of food fit for humans. I will give you whatever I can collect to make clothes."

"Do whatever you can to go begging for food. I will also come to give you something to wear," added Dzesé.

I replied, "I do not know when I will die, and I have neither

time nor reason to beg for food. Even if I were to die from the cold, I would have little reason for regret since it would be for the dharma. I will not fulfill my intentions through a religion that involves friends and lovers eating, drinking, and laughing without restraint in front of endless quantities of food and piles of fine clothing, all achieved at the expense of my practice. I don't need your clothing or your coming around. Neither will I listen to what you say, so I will not go begging."

"Well then, brother," answered Peta, "what would fulfill your intentions? It seems that even greater misery would do so. Is there nothing you can do?"

I replied, "The misery of the three lower realms is unimaginably worse than mine. Yet many are the beings who seek to experience such misery. My intentions will be fulfilled like this." And I sang the song about the way to fulfill my intentions:

I address my prayers to the lord lama's body.
Bless this beggar to stay in mountain retreat.

My happiness unknown to loved ones
And misery unknown to foes—
If thus I can die in this mountain retreat
The aims of this yogin will be complete.

My aging unknown to companions
And sickness unknown to my sister—
If thus I can die in this mountain retreat
The aims of this yogin will be complete.

My death unknown among people
And rotting corpse unseen by vultures—
If thus I can die in this mountain retreat
The aims of this yogin will be complete.

Flies sucking on my putrid flesh
And insects gnawing my bones—
If thus I can die in this mountain retreat
The aims of this yogin will be complete.

No footprints at my doorstep
And no sign of blood inside—
If thus I can die in this mountain retreat
The aims of this yogin will be complete.

No one to stand round my corpse
And no one to mourn my death—
If thus I can die in this mountain retreat
The aims of this yogin will be complete.

No one to ask where I've gone to
And no one to say I have come—
If thus I can die in this mountain retreat
The aims of this yogin will be complete.

May the prayer of this beggar to die
In a cave of some remote locale
Be cast for the benefit of beings.
When cast, my aims are fulfilled.

Dzesé said, "It is amazing that your actions at present agree with what you said earlier."

Peta said, "Whatever my brother says, I cannot bear his utter lack of food and clothing. I will bring whatever I can collect for clothing. Good food and clothing will not cause your practice to suffer. You will not beg for food, and without doing that, my brother, you will die a miserable death in this hermitage with no one around, just as you wish. If you don't die, I will bring you what I can for clothing."

Then the two of them went away. When I ate the good food, my physical ease and discomfort and the various thoughts in my mind increased. I found myself unable to meditate. I thought that there was no greater obstacle than my inability to meditate. I broke the seal to the scroll that the lama gave me and read its contents. Inside, it contained the heart-advice for transforming faults into positive qualities, quintessential points that remove obstacles and enhance one's practice. And it specifically advised that I should take good food at this time.

I came to understand that through my previous efforts in meditation, the subtle constituents were beginning to gather within the channels, but due to my poor diet they could not ascend. Peta's beer allowed them to ascend a little bit and Dzesé's offerings allowed them to ascend completely. I worked hard to apply the key points regarding physical posture and subtle winds, as well as the visualizations contained in the scroll. As a result, the knots of the secondary channels were loosened, as was the knot in the lower part of the central channel at the level of the navel.

Previously, I had understood the experience of bliss, clarity, and non-conceptuality through mere words. But now I developed the extraordinary qualities of experience and realization that were extremely potent and stable and so not like that at all. Freed from impediments, I recognized faults as good qualities. The act of clinging to thoughts dawned as the reality body. Thus in general I understood all phenomena of life's round and transcendence to be interdependent. I further ascertained that the underlying basis of mind is free from biases. Life's round is the result of the path conditioned by wrong views. Transcendence is the result of the path conditioned by insight. The essence of both is emptiness and luminosity. In particular, I understood that the qualities that manifested in my mind stream at that time arose through the interdependence of my previous meditation as the causal agent and the food and profound heart-advice as the conditioning agents. I also gained an extraordinary certainty that the Secret Mantra path of means uses sense pleasures on the path.

I recognized that Peta and Dzesé had been extremely kind, and in gratitude I dedicated their virtue to their eventual enlightenment and then sang this song of the essence of interdependence:

> I bow at the feet of Lhodrak Marpa.
> Bless this beggar to stay in mountain retreat.
>
> My fine patrons gathered much merit and so
> The interdependence achieving the two aims was set.

This body, so hard to obtain and easily broken,
Found something to eat and so now feels quite well.

The nourishing essence of solid earth
And the light rain falling from azure skies—these two
Form the interdependence that benefits beings.
The essence of interdependence is dharma divine.

An illusory body nurtured by parents
And instructions of an authentic lama—these two
Form the interdependence for doing dharma divine.
The essence of interdependence is perseverance.

A rocky cave in a deserted land
And sincere virtuous practice—these two
Form the interdependence for achieving whatever you wish.
The essence of interdependence is emptiness.

Milarepa's exertion in meditation
And the faith of beings in the three realms—these two
Form the interdependence for fulfilling the aims of beings.
The essence of interdependence is compassion.

The meditator practicing in rocky caves
And the patrons who bring him supplies—these two
Form the interdependence for reaching buddhahood together.
The essence of interdependence is dedication of merit.

The compassion of an excellent lama
And the enduring meditation of an excellent student—these two
Form the interdependence for upholding the teachings.
The essence of interdependence is the sacred commitments.

Initiations that swiftly bring blessings
And prayers of fierce faith and devotion—these two
Form the interdependence for quickly meeting.
The essence of interdependence is auspicious fortune.

Lord Akṣobhya in essence, Vajradhara,
You know this beggar's sorrow and joy.

Thereafter I meditated with great perseverance. During the day, I had the experience that allowed me to display all sorts of miracles, such as transforming my body into any desired form and levitating in space. At night in my dreams I could freely illuminate and wander through the entire universe from top to bottom. I could manifest many hundreds of mental and physical forms, with each one visiting a buddha realm and listening to the dharma as well as teaching dharma to countless sentient beings. I could perform unimaginable miracles, transforming my body into blazing fire, gushing water, and the like. Feeling joyful and encouraged by this, I continued to meditate and gained the ability to actually fly through the sky.

Once I flew to Minkyük Dripma Dzong, and while meditating there I developed the bliss-warmth of yogic heat far superior to what I had felt before. As I was flying back to Drakar Taso, I passed over a small village near Taso called Longda where a man and his son were plowing a field. The man was the brother of my uncle's daughter-in-law who had died under the collapse of my uncle's house. The son was leading the oxen while the father was guiding the plowshare and tilling the fields. The son saw me flying and cried, "Father, look at this amazing sight! A man is flying!" The father stopped working and, looking at me, said, "What's so amazing about that? He's the son of the vile woman Nyangtsa Kargyen, that cunning Mila who has been worn down by starvation. Lead the oxen, but do not let his shadow fall upon you." The father kept moving his head and body, fearful that the shadow would touch him. But the son said, "If a man can fly, cunning or not, there is no greater spectacle than that. So look, father." And the son continued looking at me.

Afterward I reflected, "Now if I work to benefit beings, I could actually help them. This is what I must do." At that time, my chosen deity revealed a prophecy stating, "In this life, devote yourself wholly to practicing in accordance with the lama's instructions. There is no greater service to the Buddha's

teachings and no greater benefit to sentient beings than that." I understood that were I to fill my entire life with practice, it would serve as the best possible example for fortunate disciples in the future to renounce this life and practice dharma. And this would be of enormous benefit to the teachings and to sentient beings. Thus I resolved to practice.

Then I thought, "I have stayed in this place a long time and have bragged about the dharma to everyone who has shown up. More importantly, people have also seen me flying, a feat I gained through my experience and realization. Now I fear that if I stay here, my practice will face obstacles caused by people asking me to avert their worldly misfortunes and obtain things they want, just like the Son of the Gods Demon,[19] as well as by the eight worldly concerns. I should go to meditate at Chubar, which was prophesied by the lama."

Placing on my back the clay pot in which I cooked nettles, I set out from Drakar Taso. My inferior food and clothing during this long period of practice caused my feet to become callused. I slipped on a stone at the entrance of my cave and fell. The handle of the pot fell off and the vessel rolled down the mountainside. I ran to catch it but the pot cracked and from within appeared a single mass of green nettle residue shaped just like the pot itself. This demonstrated that all composite things are impermanent and, reflecting on it, I understood it as an exhortation to practice. Feeling a sense of amazement and renunciation, I sang this song:

> I once had a pot, now I do not.
> This case illustrates every composite thing.
> It exemplifies human bodies of leisure and opportunity.
> This being so, I Mila the yogin
> Will press on in my practice without distraction.
> This clay pot so important, the whole of my wealth,
> Becomes my lama in the moment it breaks,
> Teaching impermanence, how amazing!

While I was singing, some hunters arrived and prepared their meal. They said, "Yogin, you have a beautiful singing voice. Now

that your clay pot has broken, what will you do with the nettle pot? How did your body become so emaciated and green?" I told them the reasons for my poor physical condition. "How amazing," they replied, "come over here," and they shared their meal with me.

While I was eating, one young hunter said, "You are a small-minded man. If you led a worldly life instead of living in such misery, you could ride a horse as fine as a young lion. You could wear the three kinds of weapons, sharp as thorns, and vanquish your bitter enemies. You could amass riches and possessions and protect the friends who love you, which would make you happy. Failing that, if you engaged in business you would be happy through your own efforts. At worst, even as a servant you would have good food and clothes and be happier in body and mind than you are now. You didn't know this before but you should do it now."

An old hunter said, "He seems to be quite content as a dharma practitioner. There's no way that he will listen to our worldly advice, so quiet down." Then to me he said, "You have a very fine voice. Please sing a song that will help our minds."

I replied, "You look at me and think I seem so miserable. But you don't realize that there's no one in the world happier, wiser, or more clear-minded than me. This is my way of being happy, equal to the best among you. So listen to this song of the yogin's galloping horse:

I bow at the feet of Marpa the Kind.

Within the mountain hermitage, my body,
Inside the temple, my breast,
At the top of a triangle, my heart,
The stallion of mind rides like the wind.

To catch him, what lasso will catch him?
To tether him, to what stake will I tether him?
If hungry, what food will I give him?
If thirsty, what drink will I give him?
If cold, in what corral will I board him?

To catch him, catch with the lasso of non-duality.
To tether him, tether with the stake of meditative absorption.
If hungry, feed him the lama's oral instructions.
If thirsty, water him at the river of mindfulness.
If cold, board him at the corral of emptiness.

For saddle and bit I use method and wisdom.
For crupper and girth I strap changeless stability.
I fasten the reins of the life-force subtle winds.
Upon him rides the young child of pristine awareness.
For a helmet he wears the Great Vehicle mind generation
And dons armor of study, contemplation, and meditation.
On his back he carries the shield of patience.
In his hands he wields the long spear of the view.
Fixed at his side is the sword of wisdom.
The smooth arrow shaft of the all-basis
Has the warp of non-anger straightened out.
It is fletched with feathers of the Four Immeasurables
And tipped with the arrowhead of sharp wisdom.
Nocked with the profound path of means
In the bow of emptiness,
I draw back an arm-span, the expanse of union,
And fire the arrow across the land.
For targets I hit the faithful.
My prey is the demon of clinging to "I."
Thus I slay enemies, the mental afflictions
And protect my friends, the six kinds of beings.
My galloping horse gallops the plains of great bliss.
My hunt is the hunt for the Victor's high state.
Racing up, I sever the root of life's round.
Racing back, I arrive at the line of enlightenment.
Racing such a horse, I win buddhahood.
See if your happiness compares with this.
I've no wish for worldly happiness.

The hunters then became faithful and went away.

I traveled to Chubar following the road to Palku, and eventually arrived in Dingri. I rested by the side of the road and had

a look around. Several young maidens, elegantly dressed in jewels, passed by on their way to Nokmo. They saw my body wracked by austerities and one of them said, "Look! How miserable! May I never be reborn with such a body."

Another one said, "How pitiful. It makes me depressed to see such a thing."

I reflected that ignorant beings truly deserve compassion. So, arousing compassion for them, I stood up and said, "My daughters, do not speak like that. You need not be so distressed. You would not be reborn like me even if you prayed to do so. Your compassion is amazing, but conceit and compassion contradict each other. So listen to my song." Then I sang this song:

To you, lord, compassionate one, I address my prayer.
Grant your blessings, venerable Marpa.

Sentient beings tormented by negative karma
Show little regard for others, only themselves.

Maidens with negative karma believe in their home life.
Their bad airs and self-importance burn like fire.
How pitiful, sentient beings whose minds are afflicted.
In this dark period of the degenerate age
Swindlers are worshipped like deities and gods,
Charlatans are prized more than jewels and gold,
The religious are tossed like pebbles on the road.
How pitiful, ignorant sentient beings.

You elegant maidens, each other's sisters,
And I Milarepa of Gungtang
Are repulsed, you by me, me by you.
But we also feel pity, you for me, me for you.
We'll cross spears of compassion
And see who wins victory in the end.

To the prattling ignoramuses
Milarepa gives oral instructions.

That's returning wine for your water,
And replacing your evil with good.

The maiden who had expressed pity said, "He is the one called Milarepa. Filled with self-importance, we said all sorts of meaningless things. Now we must acknowledge our wrongdoing." I urged the maiden who had offered this prayer to do so. She gave me seven conch-shell bracelets and they all offered prostrations and confessed their misdeeds. Then they requested a dharma instruction, and in response I sang this song:

To the lord compassionate one I address my prayers.
I shall teach authentic dharma in a brief verse.

Above, in the divine palace the Joyous
Provisional dharma is prized, the definitive, ignored.

Below, in the palace of the *nāgas*
Material dharma is prized, the profound, ignored.

In between, in this human realm of ours
Liar's dharma is prized, the master's, ignored.

In the four regions of Ü and Tsang
Pedant's dharma is prized, the meditator's, ignored.

In the dark period of the degenerate age
The wicked are prized, the righteous, ignored.

In the eyes of such elegant maidens
A fine man is prized, the yogin, ignored.

In the ears of such youthful maidens
A brief verse sounds pleasing, a bit of dharma, off-pitch.

This is my oral instruction set forth in song,
My repayment for the seven conch shells,
A celebration for completing your confession.

My song filled them with faith and they went away. I too left for Drin. Having heard accounts of both Chubar and Kyipuk, I stayed at Kyipuk Nyima Dzong and meditated there. My practice flourished and several months passed in this way. Once or twice, people from Drin came to bring food and drink. I realized that this disturbed my concentration a little. I thought, "I have spent a long time in this location and my practice has flourished. But if people now begin to come around, it would impede my concentration. I should go to some isolated, empty valley. I should go to Lapchi in accordance with my lama's command."

At that time Peta went to Drakar Taso, bringing with her some woolen cloth woven from wool and hair she had collected. Not finding me there, she went looking for me, asking everyone. In Upper Gungtang she heard that a yogin, resembling a nettle worm, had left Palku going in the direction of Latö Lho. She left to come after me. In Dingri, she saw lama Bari Lotsawa seated on a throne, sheltered by parasols, and wearing fine silken robes. Disciples blew conch shells and a great crowd of people gathered around him, offering tea and beer, and many other kinds of gifts. Peta thought, "These sorts of things are suitable for other religious practitioners. But my brother's dharma is nothing but misery, scorned by others, bringing only shame to his family. If I meet my brother, I must convince him to become this lama's servant."

She questioned some of the men gathered there, who told her I was in Drin. She reached Drin and, after looking around, found me at Kyipuk. She said, "My brother's dharma allows for nothing to eat or even clothes to wear. This makes me ashamed and embarrassed, and it's not right. Make a skirt from this woolen cloth.

"There is a lama named Bari Lotsawa who practices a different kind of dharma. He has a throne that supports him from below and parasols shelter him from above. In between he is draped in fine silks and plied with tea and beer. His disciples blow conch shells and crowds gather to offer gifts beyond imagination. Thus he benefits his followers and kinsmen. It is no exaggeration that he is a very fine dharma practitioner. See if he might accept you as his servant. Even if you become the

lowest among his disciples, you would be happy. Otherwise, my brother's dharma and my poverty will not be able to sustain us."

She sat there weeping, and I replied, "Peta, don't say that. You are embarrassed at my nakedness and my unconventional behavior, but I am satisfied with what I have here. Since it allowed me to encounter the dharma, I am not ashamed of it. Moreover, I had it right from the time I was born, so I have nothing to be ashamed of. Those who break their parents' hearts, engaging in evil actions knowingly and without restraint; those who use the property of the lama and the three jewels; and those who harm sentient beings using all sorts of deceitful means in order to achieve their own desired ends—they harm themselves and others and displease the highest gods and humans. They are a cause for shame in both this life and the next.

"In particular, if you are ashamed of the body then you should be ashamed of your swelling breasts, which you did not have when you were born. You think that I forego food and clothing in my meditation due to a lack of material support, but that is not so. Generally speaking, I fear the suffering in the lower realms of life's round. I am as terrified as if I were being cast alive into flames. When I see people picking and choosing frivolity, distraction, and the eight worldly concerns, I feel revulsion like a vomiting sick man who is given food. I am as disturbed as if I were seeing the bloodstained hands that murdered my own father. This is why I have given them up.

"Moreover, Lhodrak Marpa gave me this prophetic command: 'Abandon the frivolous distractions of the eight worldly concerns. Renounce food, clothing, and conversation. Wander in isolated places. And above all else, practice with a fierce intention to renounce this life.' So now I am following the commands of my lama. By doing so, I will not only bring about happiness in this life for those few people who have come into contact with me, I will also bring about everlasting happiness for all sentient beings, both myself and all others. Since the time of death is uncertain, I have given up actions focused on this life and the arrogance of the eight worldly concerns.

"If I tried, not only could I become lama Bari's lowest ser-

vant, I could become just like him. But I wish to attain buddhahood in this life, so I work earnestly and diligently in my practice. Now Peta, you too should abandon the eight worldly concerns and follow your brother to go meditate at Lapchi Gang. If you are able to renounce the eight worldly concerns and meditate, the sun of happiness will shine upon you in both this life and the next. Listen to your brother's song." Then I sang this song:

Lord, three-times buddhas, protector of beings,
Untainted by the eight worldly concerns,
Who blesses your lineage of disciples—
Translator Marpa, I bow at your feet.

My sister consumed by desire for this life,
Dear Peta, listen to me.

First, a parasol topped with a glimmering spire of gold;
Second, its skirting of Chinese silk hanging down;
Third, the parasol's ribs decorated with peacock feathers;
Fourth, a handle made of red sandalwood.
These four, if he wanted, your brother could have,
But your brother gave up the eight worldly concerns.
Giving up the eight worldly concerns, the sun of happiness shines.
For this reason, dear Peta, give up the eight worldly concerns.
Give up the eight worldly concerns, and come to Lapchi Gang.
We, brother and sister together, shall go now to Lapchi Gang.

First, the far-reaching tone of a white conch shell;
Second, the excellent lips and breath of a skillful blower;
Third, the ornamental cords of Chinese silk;
Fourth, the grand assembly of ordained monks.
These four, if he wanted, your brother could have,
But your brother gave up the eight worldly concerns.
Giving up the eight worldly concerns, the sun of happiness shines.
For this reason, dear Peta, give up the eight worldly concerns.
Give up the eight worldly concerns, and come to Lapchi Gang.
We, brother and sister together, shall go now to Lapchi Gang.

First, the small monastery colored with stripes on the edge of a village;
Second, the eloquent speech of its youthful teacher;
Third, the excellent stove with its butter tea;
Fourth, the capable hands of its young novice monks.
These four, if he wanted, your brother could have,
But your brother gave up the eight worldly concerns.
Giving up the eight worldly concerns, the sun of happiness shines.
For this reason, dear Peta, give up the eight worldly concerns.
Give up the eight worldly concerns, and come to Lapchi Gang.
We, brother and sister together, shall go now to Lapchi Gang.

First, the village rites of divination, chanting, and astrology;
Second, the abbess, a priestess of rituals so skilled in hypocrisy;
Third, making feast offerings with a burning desire for food;
Fourth, a sweet little song to deceive female students.
These four, if he wanted, your brother could have,
But your brother gave up the eight worldly concerns.
Giving up the eight worldly concerns, the sun of happiness shines.
For this reason, dear Peta, give up the eight worldly concerns.
Give up the eight worldly concerns, and come to Lapchi Gang.
We, brother and sister together, shall go now to Lapchi Gang.

First, a fine manor with high secure towers;
Second, the well-worked fields with excellent yield;
Third, a store of food and wealth hoarded through greed;
Fourth, a host of servants increasing the pull of life's round.
These four, if he wanted, your brother could have,
But your brother gave up the eight worldly concerns.
Giving up the eight worldly concerns, the sun of happiness shines.
For this reason, dear Peta, give up the eight worldly concerns.
Give up the eight worldly concerns, and come to Lapchi Gang.
We, brother and sister together, shall go now to Lapchi Gang.

First, a Gyiling stallion with its head held high;
Second, the saddle emblazoned with jeweled ornaments;
Third, the villainous rider with three kinds of weapons;
Fourth, a passion for vanquishing enemies and protecting friends.

These four, if he wanted, your brother could have,
But your brother gave up the eight worldly concerns.
Giving up the eight worldly concerns, the sun of happiness shines.
For this reason, dear Peta, give up the eight worldly concerns.
Give up the eight worldly concerns, and come to Lapchi Gang.
We, brother and sister together, shall go now to Lapchi Gang.

If you refuse to renounce the eight worldly concerns
And will not retreat to the site Lapchi Gang,
Then your sisterly love irritates me.

Talk of this life distracts me from practice.
From the moment of birth, death's hour is uncertain.
I do not have time to leave dharma for later.
I press on with diligence in practice without distraction.
The father lama's oral instructions benefit my mind.
Meditating on such beneficial oral instructions,
I achieve liberation, great bliss.
For this reason, I am going to Lapchi Gang.

Go ahead, sister, choose the eight worldly concerns,
Go ahead, amass negative deeds by the handful and sackload.
Go ahead, stay as long as you can in the three realms of life's round.
But if you are fearful at all of life's round,
Then renounce the eight worldly concerns.
We, brother and sister together, shall go now to Lapchi Gang.
Brother and sister, so fortunate, together shall go now to Lapchi Gangi Rawa.

Peta replied, "My brother's eight worldly concerns are what people call happiness. We, brother and sister, have none to give up. All these things you know, that this is the truth and this is the way things are, are just words to mask your realization that you will never be like lama Bari Lotsawa. I won't go to Lapchi to purchase the misery of having no food to eat or clothes to wear. I don't even know where it is. Brother, rather than fleeing from one place to another like a deer chased by dogs and hiding in rocky caves, stay in one place. That way

your meditation will improve and it will be easier for me to find you. Since people in this area seem devoted to you, you should settle here permanently. If not, at least stay a few days. Make a lower garment from this woolen cloth. I will return soon."

I promised to stay there a few days and my sister went to beg in the area around Dingri. While she was away, I made a hood that covered my entire head, gloves for each of my fingers, boots for my feet, and a sheath for my penis. A few days later my sister returned and asked me, "Brother, did you make something with the woolen cloth?"

"I did," I replied. Then I slipped each of the garments I had made onto my various appendages and showed them to her.

"Brother," she exclaimed, "you are not human. Not only have you no shame, you have also ruined the woolen cloth that I prepared with such difficulty. At times you seem to have no time for anything but practice. But at others you seem to have plenty of time to do as you like."

I replied, "I am taking advantage of the genuine yogic practices available to human beings. I know what shame is, and above all I carefully guard my vows and sacred commitments. Sister, only you feel ashamed when you see how I look. But even if I wanted to cut off my penis, I could not. So I made a modesty sleeve just as you requested, even though it distracted me from practice. Since I consider all of my other appendages to be equal parts of my body, and no different from my penis, I made sheaths for them too. I have not ruined your cloth, but have turned it into modesty sleeves. Your feeling of shame is now greater than mine, so if you are ashamed of my body, you should also be ashamed of yours. If you are happier without the things you find shameful, you should get rid of your own."

Her face darkened when I said this, but I continued, "Worldly people feel ashamed of what is not shameful, yet feel no shame at what they know to be immoral conduct and hypocrisy. They do not understand how to feel shame. So listen to your brother's song." Then I sang this song about distinguishing the ways of feeling shame:

I pay homage to the lord lamas.
Bless this beggar to understand shame.

Peta dear, bound by your shame,
Listen for a while to your brother's song.

You who feels shame out of ignorance and conventional thinking
Are ashamed of what carries no shame.
I, a yogin who knows the meaning of shame,
Lives with my three gates relaxed—
How could I overstate or understate shame?

Everyone knows that our bodies are born male or female,
And that we have organs to prove it.

Those who guard against embarrassing and shameful activity
Are not found among common people of the world.
The girl who is shameful is bought for a price.
The child who is shameful is had through a man in your lap.

The results of craving, malice, and perverted views
Are immoral conduct, hypocrisy, theft,
And the betrayal of trustworthy friends.
These are embarrassing and shameful, although few avoid them.

All meditators who renounce this life—
Through profound secret vajra behavior,
The practice of supreme quintessential instructions—
Bring their human life into the dharma
And see no point in feeling phony shame.
So Peta, do not create your own misery,
But rest in this knowledge as it is.

Her face still sullen, Peta gave me the food she had obtained through begging. Then she said, "No matter what I do, brother, you will not accept what I say and act accordingly. But I shall not forsake my brother, so please eat all of this. I will return with whatever else I can find."

As she was preparing to leave, I thought about how I might turn her mind toward the dharma. I said, "Until these provisions run out, stay here and avoid piling up sinful deeds even if you can't practice dharma." During this time, I explained as much as I could about the dharma instructions on the law of cause and effect of actions. She gained conviction in the dharma and began to lose her short temper.

At about this time my uncle died, after which my aunt began to feel sincere remorse. Leading a crossbred yak loaded with provisions, she came looking for me all the way up to Drin. When she reached Drin, she left the crossbreed and most of the provisions there and then proceeded carrying as much as she could manage. Peta, who was standing on a hilltop, saw her and recognized that she was our aunt. She exclaimed, "Our aunt has caused us and our mother so much suffering, so you shouldn't meet with her." Then she drew back the wooden bridge that led to the cave.

Our aunt appeared at the edge of the bridge and said, "Niece, do not draw back the bridge. Your aunt is here."

"That's exactly why I have drawn it back," replied Peta.

"You are right, my niece. But I am now filled with overwhelming remorse. I have come to see you, brother and sister, so put back the bridge. If you won't do that, at least tell your brother that I have arrived."

I, however, had climbed to the top of a rock on the near side of the bridge, where I was seated. Our aunt prostrated and explained in detail her reasons for wanting to meet. I thought, "I would not be behaving like a good dharma practitioner if I did not eventually meet with her. But first I must make her own up to her crimes."

I said, "In general, I have given up on relatives, but especially my uncle and aunt. First, you inflicted misery on us. And you tormented me again when I came begging, even after I had begun practicing dharma. That is why I am finished with my uncle and aunt. This song will give you my reasons. Listen!" Then I sang this song of shaming my aunt:

> Compassionate father, with loving-kindness toward all,
> Translator Marpa, at your feet I bow down.
> Be the kith for this beggar who has no kin.

Remember the deeds you have done, my aunt? Think it over.
If you do not remember, I'll remind you here with a song.
Feel remorse with attention and listen.

In Korön of Kyangatsa,
We three, mother and children, deprived of our noble father,
Were robbed of our wealth but entrusted with all kinds of misery;
In the end, we were scattered like beans with a stick
By you, our uncle and aunt.
In brief, from then on, I gave up on my kin.
To explain, I wandered the ends of the earth,
But remembered my mother and sister and returned to my home.
My mother was dead and my sister off wandering.
The weight of the sadness and anguish I felt
Led me to practice with focused attention.
Wretched and starving, I needed some food
And found myself begging at my aunt's door.
She recognized me, the destitute yogin,
Then riled up by feelings of anger and malice
She let loose her dog saying, "Sic him! Sic him!"
Using a pole from the tent as a staff
She beat me as if I were grain to be threshed.
I fell facedown then in a pool full of water.
I was nearly deprived of my most precious life.
She cut to the core with her weapon-like insults,
Attacking by calling me "treacherous fiend,"
And erupting by calling me "traitor."
Miserable, anguished, and filled with despair,
I fell short of breath and unable to speak.
Then with cunning deceptions she stole house and fields
Even though I had no further use for them.
In my aunt's body, a demon's mind—
From then on I was through with my aunt.

When I arrived at my uncle's door
He shouted with malice coarse words:
"The demon who ruined our village has come!"
Then he summoned his neighbors to kill me.

He cursed me with all sorts of vile abuses,
Angrily rained down a shower of stones,
And fired a stream of sharp arrows.
In my heart I was struck with unbearable pain,
Nearly deprived once again of my most precious life.
In my uncle's body, an executioner's mind—
From then on I was through with my uncle.
The kin of this beggar are more hateful than foes.

Later, while meditating in the mountains,
Dzesé, my faithful betrothed,
Came to see me, her love undimmed.
Her kind words, in tune with my feelings,
Helped ease the mind of a miserable man.
With nourishing drink and provisions
She relieved this indigent's hunger and thirst.
I recognize her very great kindness.

Even so, save for those who do dharma,
I've no reason to meet even Dzesé,
And still less reason to meet my aunt.
Return home while it's still daylight.
While it's still light, go away.

When I finished, my aunt shed many tears and repeatedly prostrated herself. She said, "My nephew has been right all along. I beg your forgiveness and sincerely confess my crimes. I feel terrible regret, now and into the future. It's because I have not lost all feelings for my family that I have come to see my nephew. I must see you, brother and sister, by all means. If you don't grant my wish to see you, I will kill myself."

I could bear it no longer and was about to put back the bridge when Peta whispered the reasons that we should not meet her. But I ignored her and instead replied, "Generally, someone is affected by the taint of corruption when he drinks water from the same well as a man who has corrupted his own sacred commitments. But since she has not corrupted any

dharma commitments and since I am a dharma practitioner, I should meet with her." Then I put back the bridge and met with her, just as she wished. I taught her the law of cause and effect. Her mind turned toward the dharma and later she practiced by meditating on the oral instructions. In this way, it is said, she became a self-liberated yoginī.

At this point in the story, Zhiwa Ö said to the Jetsün, "It is impossible to comprehend how the Jetsün expressed devotion for the lama when he requested dharma or persevered through meditation in the mountains once he received it. When we think about such actions it seems we are only pretending to practice dharma. We shall never be liberated from life's round. What can we do?" Then he broke down in tears.

The Jetsün replied, "If you consider the misery of life's round and of the lower realms, my devotion and perseverance do not seem so great. All dedicated individuals who hear the dharma teachings on cause and effect and develop conviction about them are capable of such perseverance. But those with no conviction about the dharma do not understand it. They are unable to renounce the eight worldly concerns, and adopt them instead. For this reason, conviction about the law of cause and effect is extremely important. Those who continually show signs that they lack conviction even about the obvious aspects of the law of cause and effect will find it difficult to develop an understanding of and conviction about the more subtle teachings on emptiness, even though explanations on emptiness are used in many examples of scripture and reasoning. After you have conviction about emptiness, you understand that emptiness itself appears as the law of cause and effect. You then begin to exert yourself in virtuous practice, adopting and rejecting various actions according to the law of cause and effect, and abandoning sinful deeds. This is the conviction that the law of cause and effect is the root of all dharma. Diligence and precision are therefore extremely important as you abandon sinful deeds and practice virtue.

"Although at first I did not comprehend the underlying truth

of emptiness, I had conviction about the law of cause and effect. For this reason, I was terrified at the thought that, having once performed such terrible negative deeds, I would be unable to avoid rebirth in the three lower realms. I became powerless to do anything but feel devotion toward my lama and persevere in meditation.

"Now, you must engage in the practice of Secret Mantra like this, in accordance with my advice. Find the strength to live alone in mountain retreat. I, an old man, shall bear you to liberation from life's round."

Then Ngandzong Bodhirājā said, "It seems that the precious Jetsün is himself the great Vajradhara manifesting in human form and that he has displayed these actions for the benefit of sentient beings. Otherwise, it is certain that he is a great being of immeasurable fortune who has gathered the accumulations and attained the state of non-returning. The Jetsün has all the requisite signs, such as 'giving up your life for the dharma' and 'great exertion in yoga.' If we ordinary people cannot even comprehend the manner in which the Jetsün practiced austerities for the sake of dharma, the deeds he undertook with devotion while living with his lama and so forth, who could actually emulate them? Our bodies would not be able to tolerate practicing that way. That is why it is certain that the Jetsün was, from the start, either a buddha or a bodhisattva. Therefore, although I am incapable of practicing dharma, I believe that sentient beings will be liberated from life's round by seeing the Jetsün's face and hearing his teachings. I beg the Jetsün to tell us whether he is an emanation of Vajradhara or a bodhisattva."

The Jetsün replied, "I have no idea whose emanation I am. But even were I an emanation from the three lower realms, if you regard me as Vajradhara or someone similar you will receive his blessings by virtue of your devotion. Although this belief that I am an emanation comes from your pure perception of me, there is no greater misunderstanding of dharma. This is because you do not recognize the greatness of perfectly practicing pure dharma.

"In general, the greatness of genuine dharma is such that even an ordinary person who carried out terrible sinful deeds, such as I did in the early part of my life, can eventually gain conviction in the law of cause and effect. If he is then able to renounce this life and meditate without his three gates becoming distracted, he can reach a state not far from attaining buddhahood. In particular, if you are able to follow a properly qualified lama, you can then receive the initiations and oral instructions that introduce one to nakedly perceiving—without obscurations of conventional thought—the essential points and heart-instructions of the short path of Secret Mantra; and if you can meditate on them, there is no doubt that you shall gain buddhahood in this life.

"But if in this life you instead commit the grievous actions of the ten non-virtuous deeds and the five heinous crimes, there is no doubt that immediately after death you shall be reborn in the lowest hell. Because you have no conviction about the law of cause and effect, you have little perseverance in practice.

"If you have heartfelt conviction about the law of cause and effect, you will fear the misery of the lower realms and wish to attain buddhahood. In that regard, it is possible for every ordinary or common person with perseverance to do as I have done: First, develop devotion for the lama. Next, persist in meditation on the oral instructions. Finally, persevere in nurturing your experience and realization. To suggest, once this is done, that such an individual is an emanation of a buddha or a bodhisattva is a sign that you lack conviction in the short path of Secret Mantra. For this reason, have conviction in the law of cause and effect. From the life stories of previous masters, contemplate the cause and effect of actions, the faults of life's round, the difficulty of attaining a human rebirth endowed with leisure and opportunity, and the uncertainty of the time of death. Apply yourself to the practice of Secret Mantra.

"I lived without food, clothing, or conversation. I strengthened my resolve. I punished my body. I meditated in the mountains with no concern for my own suffering. And in the end, I

gained great qualities of experience and realization. You too should follow my example and practice!"

Thus Milarepa spoke.

This was the seventh of the supreme deeds, the deed in which, in order to practice the lama's instructions, he renounced this life and meditated undistractedly in the mountains with perseverance and severe austerity.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Then Rechungpa asked, "The Jetsün's deeds are, in truth, amazing and wondrous beyond compare. But these episodes of your life inspire only tears and not laughter. I pray, please describe the episodes of your life that inspire laughter."

The Jetsün replied, "The episodes that inspire laughter are those in which, by virtue of practicing with perseverance, I established fortunate human and non-human disciples on the path of ripening and liberation, thereby benefiting the teachings of the Buddha."

Again, Rechungpa asked, "Were the first of your disciples human or non-human?"

"First, non-humans appeared in order to torment me, after which mostly human disciples gathered. Then came Tseringma with her display of magic. Finally, other human disciples arrived. The non-human Tseringma and the human Üpa Tönpa[20] will spread my teachings."

At that moment Seban Repa asked, "The Jetsün's principal retreat places were in Lapchi and Chubar. Apart from those two and others you mentioned earlier, where did you practice?"

"Yolmo Gangra in Nepal. The six well-known outer fortresses; the six unknown inner fortresses; and the six secret fortresses, which make eighteen; and two further fortresses, making twenty altogether. The four well-known great caves and the four unknown caves, among which some of the previous sites are also included, as well as some minor caves and mountain retreats where conditions were favorable. I have meditated in all of these places so that meditator, meditation,

and meditation object have blended into one and I no longer know how to meditate."

Again, Rechungpa asked, "Through your compassion, which has brought all phenomena to the point of resolution, even we humble disciples have attained stability in the slightest blending of unmistaken understanding and experience. Thus we are comforted and give thanks for your kindness. So that future disciples may accumulate merit, please identify by name each of your retreat places, the inner, outer, and secret fortresses, and the great caves."

"The six well-known outer fortresses are Drakar Taso Üma Dzong, Minkyük Dripma Dzong, Lingwa Drakmar Dzong, Ragma Changchup Dzong, Kyangpen Namkha Dzong, and Drakya Dorjé Dzong. The six unknown inner fortresses are Chonglung Kyungi Dzong, Kyipa Nyima Dzong, Khuchuk Wenpa Dzong, Shelpuk Chushing Dzong, Begtsé Döyön Dzong, and Tsikpa Kangtil Dzong. The six secret fortresses are Gyatrak Namkha Dzong, Takpuk Sengé Dzong, Bepuk Mamo Dzong, Lapuk Padma Dzong, Langgo Ludü Dzong, and Trogyal Dorjé Dzong. The two further fortresses are Kyipuk Nyima Dzong and Poto Namkha Dzong. The four great well-known caves are Dröpa Puk of Nyanam, Düdül Puk of Lapchi, Driché Puk of Drin, and Dzutrul Puk of Tisé. The four unknown caves are Kangtsuk Puk of Tsa, Ösal Puk of Rön, Zaök Puk of Rala, and Pukrön Puk of Kutang.

"If you meditate in these places, favorable circumstances will converge in your solitude and you will receive blessings of the lineage. Therefore, meditate in them."

At this, those listening to the discourse—disciples human and divine, laymen and women—were all filled with world-weariness, renunciation, faith, and immeasurable compassion. They felt revulsion for the eight worldly concerns that appear in this life and they all rejoiced and delighted in the authentic dharma.

The senior heart-disciples dedicated themselves through their three gates to the benefit of the teachings and the welfare of sentient beings. Then they vowed to meditate without distraction in the mountains through intense perseverance and determination in the face of austerities and hardship. The non-humans

vowed to protect the teachings. Relinquishing concern for this life, the best among the male and female lay disciples followed the Jetsün and meditated. Thus many were the yogins and yoginīs who perceived the true nature of reality. Those of intermediate capacity took vows to practice for a year or a month. Even the least among them vowed to permanently abandon some particular sinful deed and to continually engage in some particular virtuous activity. They all fulfilled their vows.

Up to this point, I have recorded the Jetsün's words exactly as he spoke them. I shall now expand a little on this brief presentation narrated by the Jetsün himself, which was like an overview of the story, of his deeds that will benefit the teachings and sentient beings as a result of his practice. This will be divided into three broad cycles: a cycle on his binding under oath the non-humans that tormented him, a cycle on establishing his fortunate heart-disciples on the path of ripening and liberation, and a cycle on turning the wheel of various dharma instructions for diverse lay disciples.

To expand on these, first there is the way in which he bound non-humans under oath. At Drakmar Chonglung, he bound the King of Obstructors Vināyaka under oath and taught the cycle on the six recollections of the lama. Then, in order to carry out his lama's command, he went to Lapchi where he bound the great deity Gaṇapati under oath and taught the instructions recorded in the cycle on Lapchi Chuzang. The next year he traveled to the interior sanctuary of Lapchi and sang the widely known Great Song of the Snow Ranges. Then, intending to visit Riwo Pelbar in Mangyul and Yolmo Gangra in Nepal in order to carry out his lama's instructions, he again journeyed to Gungtang. Drawn to Lingwa Drak, he stayed there for a while and taught the demoness of Lingwa Drak. Then at Ragma Changchup Dzong on the side of Riwo Pelbar he taught the instructions recorded in the cycle on binding under oath the earth goddess and the local spirit of Ragma. Next, he stayed at Kyangpen Namkha Dzong, where he benefited numerous humans and non-humans. Then he traveled to Yolmo Gangra and stayed at Takpuk Sengé Dzong in the dense

forest of Singala. There too he benefited a number of humans and non-humans. Then he had a vision exhorting him to benefit beings by returning to Tibet and meditating in mountain retreats and other isolated places. Accordingly, he traveled to Tibet and stayed at a cave in Kutang where he taught the instructions recorded in the cycle on the pigeon.

Second are the cycles regarding how he met his heart-disciples. Next, he stayed at Drakya Dorjé Dzong, where he benefited many sentient beings. During that period, the lady Vajrayoginī predicted in a general way how the Jetsün would meet his disciples. In particular, she prophesied Rechungpa Dorjé Drakpa, the disciple who would receive the oral instructions of the *ḍākinī* aural transmission, as well as the location of their meeting. Accordingly, while residing in Zaök Puk at the upper end of Rala in Gungtang, he met his heart-son Rechungpa. Later, Rechungpa went to India in order to cure an illness and the master and disciple met once again. At Ösal Puk in the upper end of Rön he met Tsapu Repa. Then he went to Changchup Dzong in Ragma where he met Repa Sangyé Kyap.

Afterward, while staying at Drö Puk, he gave Kyotön Śākyaguṇa, who was already a devotee, initiation and oral instructions and thus established him on the path of ripening and liberation.

Later, while traveling on his way out to Tago in Chang, he met his female disciple Peldar Bum at Gepalesum in Chung. On his return, he met Seban Repa at a guesthouse in Yeru Chang.

Then, when he went to meditate at Gyalgi Śrī in Latö, he met Drigom Repa. Having gone to beg alms during autumn, he met Repa Zhiwa Ö at Ngulbum Spring. Then in Chimlung he met Ngandzong Repa as recounted in the cycle on the walking staff.

Then, while staying in Lapchi, *ḍākinīs* urged him to carry out the lama's prophetic command, and while on the road to Tisé he met Dampa Gyakpu. On his way up, he met Kharchung Repa as recounted in the cycle on the Koré Mountain Pass of Lowo. Then, while spending the winter on the glacial foothills of Dritsé in the valley of Purang, he met Darma Wangchuk. In the spring, he departed for Tisé and overpowered Naro Bönchung through

a display of miracles, recounted in the cycle on Tisé. On his return he again stayed at Drakya Dorjé Dzong, where he met Rongchung Repa.

Then, urged on by the *ḍākinīs,* he found Bepuk Mamo Dzong. Staying there for a few days, he encountered a shepherd who followed him and later became an excellent realized master known as Lukdzi Repa. Then at Lapuk Pema Dzong he met Shengom Repa. Later, he rendered service and the most excellent offerings to the master when he stayed at Bepuk Mamo Dzong and Langgo Ludü Dzong.

Then he met Rechungpa, as recounted in the cycle on traveling through Choro Dritsam.

Then, while staying at Nyishang Gurta in Mön, he met Khyira Repa. It was on his account that the Jetsün's great fame spread throughout Nepal. Tārā then revealed a prophecy, and at her prompting, the King of Khokhom presented offerings to the master.

At the invitation of Rechungpa and Shengom Repa, he then stayed at Nyanyön Puk in the lowlands of Lapchi. The following year he stayed at Chonglung Drak. Then traveling to Chubar, he taught the instructions recorded in the three successive cycles on Tseringma. Next, when he went to Drin Dingma he met Repa Dorjé Wangchuk. Then, while the master and disciples were staying at Drö Puk of Nyaṇam, he met the Indian Dharmabodhi at Balpo Dzong, who prostrated before the Jetsün. This increased the master's fame and respect, on account of which Tönpa Darlo became jealous and challenged him to a debate, recorded in the cycle on his refutation through the display of miraculous power and authority. This led to the accounts recorded in the cycle on Rechung and Tipu. During this time, he met Megom Repa at Drö Puk. At Nagtra in Nyanam he met Rema Salé Ö.

Then the Jetsün went to Drakmar Poto. While staying there, he saw Rechungpa returning from India and went to greet him, recorded in the cycle on the yak horn and the cycle on the Song of Wild Asses.

Then he traveled to Chubar, where he met Lengom Repa of Dakpo.

At Trodé Tashigang in Drin he met the incomparable Dakpo Lharjé, the great being foretold by the previous buddhas, the most excellent heart-disciple, the monk, vajra-holder, and great heroic bodhisattva Dawö Zhönu, who took birth in human form in order to benefit beings.

Then, while staying at Omchung in Drin, he met Lotön Gendün, who first opposed him and later became his follower.

Then, while staying at Kyipuk Nyima Dzong, he met Dretön Tashibar of Drin. While engaging in yogic behavior he met Likor Charu, one among a group of monks, who followed him as an attendant.

Ḍākinīs prophesied that the precious Jetsün would have twenty-five adepts among his human disciples. These are the eight heart-sons, the thirteen close-sons, and the four sisters. There are extensive cycles regarding how the master met each one.

Third are the various cycles of story fragments. He described how he met his heart-sons in a number of inner and secret fortresses but did not tell the order in which they occurred. There are several cycles on answers to questions of resident disciples and lay followers. There is a cycle on Bonpori that occurred while Gampopa was staying with him. Then there is the cycle on initiation and consecration when he went to Nyanam. There is the cycle on Shendoṛmo and Leksé Bum at Tsarma, and then the cycle on the importance of remaining joyful at the time of death. There is the cycle on Düdül Pukmoché and the cycle on taking a stroll when the master and Rechungpa went to Lapchi. Then, having returned, there is the cycle on Ramding Nampukma. Then, while staying at Drö Puk of Nyanam at the invitation of lay followers, the Jetsün narrated his life story. Following that, there is the cycle on Rechungpa's departure for Ü. There is the cycle on his meeting with Dampa on the Tong Pass at the insistence of the *ḍākinī* Sengé Dongchen. There is the cycle on the iron hook of compassion for the dead and repaying the kindness of his mother at Lezhing. There is the cycle on his final testament given to lay followers of Tsarma and other people of Nyanam. Then there is the cycle on Lharjé Yangngé at Tingri that occurred while on his way to Chubar.

Then there is the cycle on Rechungpa's second departure for Ü, after the Jetsün reached Chubar. There is the cycle on the patron Tashi Tsek at Lhadro in Drin. There is the cycle on his lay followers such as Dzesé Bum and Khuchuk at Drakar in Drin. There is the cycle on his victory over the four demons at Drakmar Poto and the answers to questions of a mantra practitioner. There is the cycle on how he displayed bodily miracles to the delight of his disciples.

There are an unimaginable number of such cycles, both well known and little known, in which he turns the wheel of dharma. In this way, he ripened and liberated those of highest capacity, beings with untold great fortune. He ripened and taught the path of liberation to those of intermediate capacity. Those of least capacity he imbued with the firm intention to train in the practice of arousing the attitude of supreme awakening and in the bodhisattva discipline. Even those lacking fortune altogether he imprinted with the inclination toward real virtue. Thus he performed the enlightened activity of establishing them in the happiness of the gods and humans in the higher realms. With compassion as vast as space, he illuminated the teachings of the Buddha and protected sentient beings from life's round and the lower realms' myriad sufferings.

These are described at great length in the context of *The Hundred Thousand Songs*.

This was the eighth of the supreme deeds, the deed of benefiting the teachings and sentient beings through the results of his practice.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Finally, all these activities had been carried out. At that time, there lived in Drin Dingma a wealthy and arrogant teacher named Geshé Tsakpuwa. He always sat at the head of the row when villagers from Drin held ritual assemblies. He pretended to show respect to the Jetsün but, overcome with jealousy, he decided to humiliate the master before his assembled patrons. To do this, he pretended to be troubled by doubts and asked many questions.

During the first autumn month of the wood-tiger year, the Jetsün was invited to sit at the head of the assembly row during a large wedding celebration in Drin. Geshé Tsakpuwa was also there, but was seated farther down the line. He prostrated to the Jetsün, hoping that the prostrations would be returned in front of the assembled crowd. The Jetsün had never bowed to anyone except his own lama, nor had he ever returned anyone's prostration. Following this custom, he did not return the Geshé's prostrations.

The Geshé thought, "A fine scholar as qualified and learned as myself bowing before a know-nothing fool such as him, and not receiving prostrations in return! I will humiliate him!"

He took out a treatise on logic and said, "Jetsün, in order to clear up the doubts I have about this text, please give a discourse providing both a close reading of the text and an interpretation of its supplementary points."

The Jetsün replied, "You know very well how to give close readings of the words found in treatises. But a close reading of the underlying meaning requires eradicating clinging to the sense of self of individuals by developing equanimity and renouncing

the eight worldly concerns, and then eradicating clinging to the sense of self of phenomena by recognizing the equal taste of life's round and transcendence. All of which is gained solely through meditating in the mountains. Apart from that, I have no use for saying this is a response to that word or this logically follows from that—none of which involves practice. I have never studied such things. I know nothing about them. And even if I did, I have forgotten it. Listen to my song of why this is so." Then he sang this song:

I bow at the feet of the translator Marpa.
Bless me to shun the conventional.

The lama's blessings penetrated my mind
And my mind never strayed, never veered from the dharma.

Again and again I meditated on love and compassion
And forgot about clinging to self and others.

Again and again I meditated with the lama on the crown of
  my head
And forgot about arrogant leaders.

Again and again I meditated never leaving my chosen deity
And forgot my inferior body.

Again and again I meditated on the aural transmission instructions
And forgot about scriptures in writing.

Again and again I nurtured ordinary mind
And forgot about ignorance and confusion.

Again and again I meditated on the intrinsic three bodies
And forgot about fostering hopes and fears.

Again and again I meditated on this life and the next as equal
And forgot about fear of birth and death.

Again and again I nurtured experience in solitude
And forgot about pleasing family and friends.

Again and again I absorbed experience in my mind stream
And forgot about philosophical positions.

Again and again I meditated on no-arising, -ceasing, or
-abiding
And forgot about views to be asserted.

Again and again I recognized appearances as reality body
And forgot about referential meditation.

Again and again I rested in an uncontrived natural state
And forgot about superficial activity.

Again and again I kept myself humble in body and speech
And forgot about the pride of great men.

Again and again I used the temple in my illusory body
And forgot about community temples.

Again and again I practiced with no concern for words
And forgot about literal meanings.

Let scholars give literal readings of texts.

The Geshé replied, "The tradition of meditators may be as you describe it, but if I were to pursue the matter using logical reasoning, your dharma talk would lead nowhere. I had hoped that the Jetsün was a good man, which is why I prostrated before him."

The patrons found this unacceptable and in agreement they said, "Master Geshé, however learned you may be in the dharma, the world is filled with religious people like you. You are not equal to even a single pore on the Jetsün's body. So take a seat at the head of our assembly and quiet down. Do what you can to increase your wealth. You do not have even the smell of dharma."

Despite his growing anger, the Geshé was unable to protest since they were all in agreement. His face turned dark and he thought, "Milarepa, who acts like a know-nothing madman with his nonsense, his lies, and deceit, is a disgrace to the teachings. He confuses people and then lives off their charity. But although I have such extensive learning and am the wealthiest and most influential man in the region, in religious matters I am not even respected as much as a dog. I must do something about this."

The Geshé had a lover. He gave her a large turquoise and then sent her to deliver some poisoned curds to the Jetsün, who was at the time staying at Drakar in Drin. The Jetsün knew that he had established his fortunate disciples, those with whom he had karmic connections, on the path of ripening and liberation, and that even without the woman's poisoned food the time for him to die had arrived. He also knew that if she did not acquire the turquoise before he took the poison, she would never obtain it. So he said to her, "I shall not eat your food offering just yet. Bring it back later and then I shall eat it."

The woman wondered if the Jetsün suspected her so she returned, frightened and filled with shame. To Geshé Tsakpuwa she said, "With his clairvoyance, the Jetsün knew about our plan and would not take the poisoned food."

When she reported what had happened, the Geshé replied, "If he was really clairvoyant, he would not have told you to bring it back later. He would have given it to you and forced you to eat it. The fact that he did not do this but only said to bring it back later is a sign that he is not clairvoyant. Now, take this turquoise and be certain that he eats the poison."

He gave her the turquoise but she said, "Everyone is convinced that he is clairvoyant. I am certain of it. It is because he knew what was happening that he did not eat the poisoned food yesterday, and he will not eat it today. I don't need the turquoise. I am too afraid and will not do it. I won't go."

"Laymen believe he is clairvoyant," the Geshé replied, "because they have not read the scriptures and have been fooled by his deceptions. In my scriptures it is taught that clairvoyant men are not like him. I am certain he is not clairvoyant. Now,

give him the food, and once I have seen proof we shall be married. We have already lain together for a long time, and as it is said, 'there is not much difference between eating a little garlic and a lot.' Then you will be put in charge not only of this turquoise but of all my wealth, inside my house and out, and we will share our happiness and sorrow. We are now united in this scheme, so do your best."

Hoping these promises were real and that they would be fulfilled, she mixed the poison with some curds and brought them to the Jetsün while he was staying at Drodé Tashigang. The Jetsün smiled and then took them in his hands. "Geshé Tsakpuwa was right, he does not seem to be clairvoyant," thought the woman.

At that moment, the Jetsün said, "Did you receive the turquoise as a gift for the deed you are performing?"

Terrified and ashamed, the woman prostrated herself and in a trembling voice choked with tears said, "I did receive the turquoise. But please do not eat this. Give it back to me, who was intending to do you harm."

"What will you do with it?"

"I will eat it myself since I am such a wicked person."

The Jetsün said, "First of all, my compassion is such that I could not bear to hand it over for you to eat. It would violate my training in the aspiration to enlightenment and would constitute a root infraction of my vows. More importantly, my opportunity to train disciples and my life span have both come to an end. It is now time to depart for another realm. Your food will not harm me so it does not matter whether I eat it or not. Had I eaten it the first time, you would not have received the turquoise as payment for your crime. That is why I did not take it. Now that the turquoise is in your hands, I will eat it in order to fulfill the Geshé's intentions and to ensure that you can keep the turquoise.

"The Geshé promised many things for you both once you carried this out, but your hopes will not be fulfilled. He also said many things about me, none of which are true. The time will thus come when both of you will feel intense remorse. When that happens, in order to purify yourself through this

feeling, dedicate your entire life to practice. If you cannot do that, then never again commit terrible sinful deeds like this, even at the cost of your life. Offer prayers to me and my lineage from the depths of your heart. You both have always traded happiness for misery. This time I will see if I can purify your current sinful deeds. Speak to no one about your actions until I am dead. Afterward, everyone will come to know about them. Although you have neither seen with your own eyes nor heard with your own ears the truth of my previous teachings, the time will come when you will believe them to be true. So keep them in mind and see if they are true." Having said this, he ate the poison.

The woman then repeated this to Geshé Ṫsakpuwa, who said, "Not all that is said is true. Not all that is cooked is edible. It is enough for me that he has taken the poison. Now remember to keep quiet about it."

Meanwhile, the Jetsün announced, "Those faithful patrons who have a connection with me, headed by the people of Nyanam and Dingri, come see me and bring supplies for a ritual feast. Those from the surrounding area who have not met me but wish to do so should also come." His disciples spread this proclamation, although most people who heard it did not believe they were the Jetsün's own words. But faithful male and female disciples who had a previous dharma connection, and many fortunate individuals who desired to meet him, gathered at Chubar. For many days, the Jetsün gave instructions of provisional meaning on the law of cause and effect as well as instructions of definitive meaning introducing the quintessential truth.

During this time, some fortunate disciples seated in the audience clearly saw the sky filled with gods listening to the dharma. Others perceived that the earth and sky were entirely filled with gods and humans listening to the dharma and were thus filled with joy. Everyone plainly saw the pristine sky filled with extraordinary signs: a canopy of rainbow light, parasols and victory banners made of five-colored clouds, and innumerable other offerings. A rain of five-colored flowers descended. They heard sweet sounds of beautiful music and smelled delightful scents such as they had never experienced before.

Perceiving such wondrous signs, those in the audience of intermediate ability asked the Jetsün, "We have the joyful feeling that the earth and sky are entirely filled with gods and humans listening to the dharma, and we have directly witnessed such wondrous signs. What is the reason for this?"

The Jetsün replied, "Among you human followers of the dharma, apart from yogins who have attained the bodhisattva levels and fortunate lay followers, capable individuals are few in number. But virtuous gods have gathered to listen to the dharma, filling all of space, and present to me divine substances that are offerings of the five sense pleasures, which likewise fill you humans with a sense of well-being. This is the reason that you both sense and directly witness such wondrous signs."

"What then is the reason that some of us do not see these signs?"

"There are many among the gods who have attained the state of non-returning and the bodhisattva levels. To see them requires an extrasensory physical eye. Lacking that, one needs at least a fierce yearning for the two accumulations and a wearing down of the mental imprints left by the two types of obscuration. If you can see the principal gods, who have attained the bodhisattva levels, then you will also be able to see their retinues. So if you wish to see the gods, strive to gather the accumulations and purify obscurations. If you strive in this way you will see the ultimate god, your own mind."

Then he sang this song about the way to see the gods:

> I bow at the feet of Marpa the kind.
> Bless your servant who has a fine lineage.
>
> From the pure lands, Tuṣita and others,
> Gather virtuous gods to listen to dharma
> Before Milarepa the yogin,
> Filling the entire sky.
>
> Lacking the five kinds of eyes,
> How could ordinary folk see them?
> I see them all very clearly.

But common folk see divine offerings:
The sky filled with rainbows and light,
A shower of divine flowers falling.
They smell fragrant scents and hear sweet sounds.
With pure outlook, all sense a well-being.
This is the Kagyu lamas' compassion.

For those falling under this compassionate protection,
If you wish to see all the *ḍākinīs* and gods
Listening to dharma, attend to my song.

Through piling up negative karma long into the past,
Since birth you took pleasure in sinful activity
And never took interest in virtue.
In old age too, your mind knows no virtue
So you're sure to experience the ripening of karma.

If you wonder can sins be removed through confession,
They are purified, keeping virtue in mind.
But knowingly engage in sinful activity,
And you trade meager food for a bad reputation.

Showing others the path
When you don't know the way
Harms yourself and others.

If you truly abhor your own misery,
Give up ever harming others.

At the feet of your lama and chosen deity
Show remorse for the sinful deeds you have done.

Vowing never to do them again
Is the oral instruction to purify quickly.

In general, sinners have sharp intellects.
Unable to focus, they delight in diversion.

Lacking an interest in dharma
Is a sign you still do sinful deeds.
Confess them all over and over again.

Without getting distracted earnestly strive
To gather accumulations and purify obscurations.

Do that and you will see not only
The virtuous gods who listen to dharma,
But also see the highest of all the gods:
Your own mind, the reality body.

If you see this, you bear witness to
The whole show of life's round and transcendence.
Then your actions all come to an end.

Among the gods and humans assembled there listening to the dharma, those of greatest ability ascertained the unmistaken truth that the mind is the reality body. Those of intermediate ability developed an extraordinary non-conceptual experience of bliss-clarity and entered the path. Even among those of least ability, not one failed to generate the intention to attain supreme enlightenment.

Then the Jetsün said, "Resident disciples, students, humans, and gods assembled here, it is by virtue of the excellent prayers we made in previous lives that we have come together today and are connected through the pure dharma. I am now a withered old man and I do not know if we shall meet many more times. Do not waste the dharma instructions I have taught you, but practice them as much as you can. If you do that, you will be born first among my retinue in my buddha field of awakening. So rejoice!"

The lay followers of Nyanam were overcome with devotion and, clutching his feet, wailed tears of sorrow as they fervently cried, "Do the Jetsün's words mean he intends to depart to work for the benefit of others? If that is so, he must depart from Nyanam to the celestial realms. At the very least, he must

visit there once more." Likewise, disciples from Dingri and other regions eagerly begged him to visit their homes.

The Jetsün replied, "I am now old and shall not go to Nyanam or Dingri. I shall await my death at Drin and Chubar. You all should go and offer fine prayers and then we shall meet in a pure celestial realm."

The villagers then requested, "Although the Jetsün will not come now, may he bless with good fortune the places he visited. May he also offer a special prayer for all sentient beings, especially those who have seen his face, heard his name and teachings, or have some other connection with him."

The Jetsün replied, "Your giving me provisions out of devotion is a great kindness. My teaching you dharma having aroused the profound aspiration to enlightenment is also a great kindness. Since I am a yogin who has achieved power over words of truth, I will offer a special prayer for both the temporary and ultimate happiness of everyone here." Then he sang this song of prayer:

I bow at the feet of the translator Marpa,
Father, protector of beings, who fulfilled his prayers.
Listen, all my disciples assembled here.

You have shown me great kindness.
I too have shown you great kindness.
Master and students are equal in kindness.
May we meet once again in the land Abhirati.

May all my patrons seated here
Likewise live long and gain merit.
May they avoid wrong intentions
And may their plans be fulfilled in accord with the dharma.

May this region be blessed with good fortune,
The joys of increasing rich harvests,
And ever engage in the dharma,
Free from disease and discord.

In the land Abhirati may I once again meet
Those who have seen my face or heard my voice,
Remembered my life story,
Or heard of it or of my name.

In the land Abhirati may I once again meet
Those who act and practice with my life in mind,
Those who write or teach or listen to it,
Read it or pay it respect,
And those who emulate my life.

In the future may all individuals
Who are able to do meditation
And practice austerities, as have I,
Be free from obstructions and errors.

For those who practice an ascetic life
Lies merit beyond comprehension.
For those who urge others to choose such a life
Lies kindness beyond comprehension.
For those who hear my life story
Lies blessing beyond comprehension.
Through these three incomprehensible blessings
May they find liberation simply by hearing it, and then
Achieve their aims through its mere contemplation.

May all of my shelters and retreat places
And all of my personal belongings
Bring happiness wherever they are.

Just as the element space permeates
Earth, water, fire, and wind,
May I too be present in every place.

May the eight kinds of non-humans, from serpents to gods,
And hordes of local spirits and elementals,
Not carry out even a moment of harm
But rather fulfill these wishes in accord with dharma.

May I guide all beings leaving no one behind,
Not even the smallest of insects,
So that none falls prey to life's round.

The lay followers were delighted by this and doubted whether the Jetsün would really die. All the disciples from Nyanam and Dingri then requested his blessings and prayed more urgently than before. When all those in the assembly had each returned home, the rainbow lights and other signs in the sky likewise disappeared.

Then the people of Drin called upon Zhiwa Ö and other influential heart-disciples to request the Jetsün's presence. To suppress a serpent spirit in Drin named Dolpa Nakpo, the Jetsün stayed in a retreat cave constructed at the top of a flat rock called Rekpa Dükchen, which was shaped like the hood of a snake. He taught the dharma to his patrons in Drin. Then at last the Jetsün said, "Resident disciples, if you need to clarify any misconceptions regarding my oral instructions, do so quickly. I do not know if I will linger for very long."

The resident disciples conducted a ritual feast and then requested the oral instructions in their entirety. From the assembly-row Drigom and Seban said, "Judging from what the Jetsün has said, we do not believe that he will soon pass into the state of transcendence. Surely his life is not yet over."

"My life and my activities in training disciples are both now complete. I will soon reveal signs that this is so."

A few days later, the great Jetsün showed signs of illness. At that time Ngandzong Repa said, "For the Jetsün's illness, we disciples will present a ritual feast of offering cakes to the lamas, chosen deities, *ḍākinīs,* and dharma protectors. We will also perform a longevity ceremony and medical treatments." He then called the patrons and began making preparations for the rituals.

But the Jetsün said, "For a yogin, illness is basically nothing more than an inspiration to spiritual practice. He must adopt whatever happens as part of the path, without performing rituals, facing even illness or death. In my case I, Milarepa, have already performed all the rituals in the tradition of my kind

lama Marpa. I have transformed adverse circumstances into heartfelt companions without the need for intervening forces, so I don't need rituals for my circumstances. I have revealed the true nature of bad omens to be demons of conceptual thought, and have transformed them into dharma protectors who perform the four kinds activity, all without the need for ransom rituals or drum calls, so I don't need rituals for demons. And I have allowed the five poisons to arise as the bliss of the five kinds of wisdom without the need for medical treatment such as the six precious substances, so I don't need medical treatment.

"When the time comes, my physical body of the generation stage will dissolve into the illusory divine body of the completion stage within a state of luminosity. Longevity ceremonies are therefore pointless. As a result of their previous sinful deeds, worldly people experience a host of miseries in this life, such as birth, aging, sickness, and death. Though you may perform medical treatments and rituals, they cannot be averted. No method of pacification, enrichment, subjugation, or destruction, nothing whatsoever, can avert them—not the power of kings, not the skill of the brave, not the bodies of beautiful women, not the wealth of the rich, not the speed of cowards, not the joking of the sharp-tongued. So you can be sure that you will experience such misery. If you fear misery and desire happiness, I have an effective rite for avoiding misery and experiencing everlasting happiness."

"Please give it to us."

"Very well. It is certain that you will experience the miseries of what is called life's round: everything accumulated is exhausted, everything constructed is destroyed, everything united is separated, everything born dies. For this reason you must renounce such activity from the very beginning so that, without accumulating, constructing, or uniting, you practice the unborn nature of reality according to the instructions of a qualified lama. These are the most effective rites. Furthermore, I have an important instruction to give you later as my final testament. Do not forget it."

Repa Zhiwa Ö and Ngandzong Repa continued, "If the

Jetsün were in good health, he would continue to benefit numerous sentient beings. Even if he will not heed our requests, please perform a ritual of profound Secret Mantra and accept a longevity ceremony and medical treatment so that we will have no regrets."

The Jetsün replied, "Had my time not come, I would do as you both have asked. But to perform a ritual of profound Secret Mantra for the purposes of this life without arousing the enlightened attitude for the benefit of beings would be an offense against the wisdom deities, similar to asking a king to step down from his throne to sweep the floor. You must never perform rituals of profound Secret Mantra solely for your own aims in this life, although ordinary folk show no regret for doing so. I continuously performed rites of Secret Mantra in isolated retreats for the benefit of all sentient beings. These are proper rituals. As a result, my mind does not waver from the seat of reality itself. This is the proper longevity ceremony. Marpa's medical treatments eradicated illness of the five poisons from its root. These too are proper medical treatments.

"However, for dharma practitioners like you who are unable to adopt negative circumstances as part of the path, if your time has not come and circumstances obstruct your practice toward enlightenment, then it is permissible to take medical remedies or to perform rituals. This is a period in which temporary circumstances may be averted by the great power of dependent origination and be transformed into good qualities.

"It was with just these sorts of less advanced disciples in mind that the Blessed One showed his hand for diagnosis to the physician Kumāra and took medicine. As the time had come for him to perform such activities, the Buddha then demonstrated the act of passing into transcendence. Now my time has also come, so I will not give permission to give medicine or perform rituals."

Then the two *repa* disciples said, "If it is certain that the Jetsün will depart in order to benefit others, please give us disciples advice on how we should venerate your corpse, how we should make clay figurines and build a stupa, who should man-

age your religious seats, how we should perform your memorials, and how we should practice listening, contemplation, and meditation."

The Jetsün said, "Through the kindness of gracious Marpa I exhausted all deeds of life's round and transcendence. It is uncertain that a yogin whose three gates have been liberated in the very nature of things will leave a corpse. There is no need to make clay figurines or to build a stupa. I have no monastery of my own so there is no need to establish a religious seat. Keeping to uninhabited and isolated places such as rocky and snow-covered mountains, you all should lovingly protect disciples, the six types of sentient beings. Do not slack in producing figurines, the four-session yoga. Atop the stupa of all phenomena, erect a victory banner of accomplishment in the training of sacred outlook. For a memorial, pray sincerely in word and thought from the depths of your heart. For a system of practice, reject that which increases ego clinging and afflictions, and harms sentient beings even if it appears to be virtuous. Practice that which serves as an antidote for the five poisons and benefits sentient beings, even if it appears to be sinful, because it is in essence authentic dharma.

"If, after hearing this, you disregard it and fail to practice, then your learning, however great it may be, is an obstruction that will cast you into the depths of the lower realms. Therefore, since life is short and the time of death is uncertain, devote yourself to meditation. Practice virtue and reject sinful deeds as best you know how, even at the cost of your own life. The meaning of this can be summed up as follows: act in such a way that you will not be ashamed of yourself. Do this and even if your actions contradict the letter of some texts they will not contradict the intentions of the previous Victors. Collected here is their understanding of all aspects of study and contemplation, and through them the intentions of this old man will be fulfilled. If my intentions are fulfilled, all your actions of life's round and transcendence will come to an end. On the other hand, any means for fulfilling worldly intentions are of no use at all. This is the way things are." Then he sang this song of "what use":

I bow at the feet of the translator Marpa.

Disciples gathered in faith and assembled here,
Listen to this testament song, last words
Of me your old father Milarepa.

Through the kindness of Lhodrak Marpa
I, Milarepa the yogin,
Have finished all of my work.

You followers, disciples, and sons,
If you listen, do then as I've already done.

My intentions and those of
The previous Victors will be fulfilled.
The great aims of yourself and others are thus gained in this life.

All actions contrary to this
Do no good for oneself or for others,
And thus my intentions would stay unfulfilled.

Without training under lamas who have lineage,
What use is it to request initiation?

Without mixing your mind stream with dharma,
What use is it to memorize tantras?

Without casting off worldly activity,
What use is it to meditate on instructions?

Without the three gates aligned with the dharma,
What use is it to perform rituals?

Without accepting insults with remedies,
What use is it to cultivate patience?

Without shunning attachment and aversion,
What use is it to present offerings?

Without weeding the root of self-centeredness,
What use is it to practice charity?

Without seeing all beings as your parents,
What use is it to keep religious seats?

Without sacred outlook rising in your mind,
What use is it to construct stupas?

Without ability in the four-session yoga,
What use is it to mold figurines?

Without offering prayers from your heart,
What use is it to offer memorials?

Without heeding the oral instructions,
What use is it to mourn?

Without faith and devotion while I'm alive,
What use is it to view my corpse?

Without world-weariness and renunciation,
What use is it to give things up?

Without cherishing self less than others,
What use is there in kind words of pity?

Without giving up afflictions and desire,
What use is it to render service?

Without holding what's taught as authentic,
What use is it to in many followers?

Doing deeds that are of no use
Will harm you, so set yourself straight.

The yogin whose work is complete
Has no need for a pile of busywork.

The disciples were deeply moved by this song. Then, when the Jetsün began to show signs of increasing illness, Geshé Tsakpuwa made a show of bringing him offerings of meat and beer, and pretended to inquire about his health. The Geshé said, "It is a pity that an accomplished master such as the Jetsün was afflicted by this kind of illness. If there was a way to share it, you could divide it among your disciples. If there was a way to transfer it, you could give it to a person like me. But there is no way to do that. What should be done now?"

The Jetsün smiled and said, "It should be clear to you that, while there was no reason for this illness to afflict me, I could not avoid it. Generally speaking, illness for an ordinary person is not like illness for a dharma practitioner, who should treasure it as an opportunity to practice. And in my case, I wear my illness as an ornament." Then he sang this song:

> Life's round and transcendence, clear in luminosity's sphere,
> Are held in the hand of their natural place
> And imprinted with the Great Seal's mark.
> I thus have the greatness of non-duality,
> And the courage unhindered by obstacles.
> Illness, affliction, sins, and obstructions—
> A yogin, I flaunt them as ornaments.
> They abide as channels, subtle winds, and drops,
> And adorn my major and minor marks, generosity and the rest.
> May they purify the sins of ill will.
> This illness that greatly becomes me,
> I could transfer but have no reason to do so.

The Geshé thought, "He suspects that I poisoned him, but he is not certain. Although he has reason to transfer his illness, I am sure he cannot." Then he said, "If only I knew the reason for the Jetsün's illness. If it were a benign or malicious demon I would exorcise it. If it were a disorder of the elements in your body, I would remedy them. But I do not know the cause. If you are able to transfer your illness, please give it to me."

The Jetsün replied, "A certain being has become possessed

by the greatest demon of all, self-clinging. It is this demon that has caused the illness disturbing the elements in my body. You could neither exorcise nor remedy it. If I shifted my illness to you, you could not endure it for even a moment, so I shall not transfer it."

The Geshé thought, "He cannot transfer his illness and is trying to deceive me."

"Transfer it anyway," he urged.

"In that case, I will not transfer it to you but to the door over there. Watch." When Milarepa transferred it to the door of his retreat cell there was a loud crash as it shuddered and splintered. And at that moment, the Jetsün rested without illness.

The Geshé wondered if it was a magic trick and said, "How amazing. Now transfer it to me."

"Very well, I will give the Geshé a taste," replied Milarepa, and he withdrew the illness from the door and transferred it to Tsakpuwa, who collapsed in pain. Paralyzed and gasping for air, he lay there barely conscious and on the verge of death. The Jetsün then took back most of the illness and said, "I transferred only half of my illness. Can you not even withstand that?"

Having experienced such pain, the Geshé was filled with an intense, unbearable feeling of regret. He placed the Jetsün's feet on his head and as he wept tears of heartfelt emotion he cried, "Precious Jetsün, genuine master, just as you said, it was I—cast under a spell—who caused the illness. I offer all of my inner and outer possessions together with my house to the Jetsün. Please think of me, Jetsün, so that I might not suffer the consequences of this terrible deed."

The Jetsün was extremely pleased by this sincere confession and he took back the remainder of the illness. Then he said, "Throughout my life I have had no need for house or wealth. And now on the verge of death, I still have no need for them, so take back your offerings. From here on, do not do anything that contradicts the dharma, even at the cost of your own life. Now I shall recite a prayer so that you will not suffer the consequences of your actions." Then he sang this song:

I bow at the feet of the genuine master Marpa.

May the sins of the five inexpiable crimes
Once confessed be swiftly forgiven.

May the sinful deeds of all beings be cleansed
Through my virtue and happiness,
And that of the three-times buddhas.

And also may I take on and purify
Every last bit of your suffering.

I feel such compassion for those who harm
Their lama, their master, their parents.
May I take on and purify
The consequences of these kinds of actions.

May you be free from the company of sinful friends,
At all times and in every circumstance.

May you find the company of virtuous friends
In all of your lifetimes to come.

May you shun bad intentions, exhausting your merit,
And resist harsh behavior with others.

May all sentient beings finally attain
The profound intention, the mind of enlightenment.

The Geshé was overwhelmed with joy and said, "Following the Jetsün's instructions, from now on I will devote my life to practice and never do anything that contradicts the dharma. The sinful actions I carried out in the past were for the sake of my house and wealth. But I no longer have use for my house and fields, or my wealth. So although the Jetsün will not take them for himself, he should still accept them to provide support for his disciples' practice."

Despite this earnest request, the Jetsün did not accept these gifts. Later, the disciples used them as offerings to establish an annual memorial service for the Jetsün, a practice that is still performed at Chubar today. Eventually, Geshé Tsakpuwa too renounced this life and became an excellent dharma practitioner.

Then the Jetsün said, "It was necessary for me to stay in this place so that a terrible sinner could express his regret and thus be released from his sinful deeds. For a meditator like me to die in a village would be like a king dying in a commoner's house. So now I shall go to make my charnel ground at Chubar."

Seban Repa said, "Since you are fatigued by illness, we should carry you on a stretcher."

"You cannot be certain that I am sick, and you cannot be certain that I shall die. I have displayed the appearance of sickness, and I shall go to Chubar to display the appearance of death. I do not require a stretcher. Some of you younger *repas* go on ahead of me to Chubar."

The younger *repas* then left for Chubar, but the Jetsün reached Driché Puk before them. Another Jetsün departed in the company of the senior resident disciples. Yet another Jetsün displayed the appearance of illness seated upon the flat rock Rekpa Dükchen. Another was attended by faithful disciples who came to see him later at Chubar. Another Jetsün taught the dharma seated at Drakar to patrons from Dingma who had gathered outside, while individual Jetsüns appeared inside the homes of each resident in order to receive their respects.

Those who had gone on ahead to Chubar said, "The Jetsün has reached Chubar before us."

The senior disciples said, "He was accompanied by us on the journey." Each person who arrived later said that he had accompanied the Jetsün during the trip.

One person said, "He is staying in my house."

Those who had listened to his dharma teachings said, "On that day he was in Drakar teaching dharma."

Each person who had paid his respects likewise said, "On that day I invited him to my home to pay my respects."

As they all had different stories and could not agree upon

what had happened, they asked the Jetsün, who replied, "All of you are correct. I was teasing you."

Then the Jetsün remained at Driché Puk in Chubar, displaying the appearance of illness. During this time, the signs that had appeared previously while he was teaching the dharma, such as rainbow light, filled the entire sky, the mountain peaks, and the valleys of Chubar. Everyone was then certain that the Jetsün would depart for another realm. Repa Zhiwa Ö, Ngandzong Repa, and Seban Repa asked, "To which realm does the Jetsün intend to go? Where should we direct our prayers? What are the final instructions that you said you had to give us? Please offer us advice on how we all should practice."

The Jetsün replied, "Pray wherever you are inclined to do so. If you pray with faith and devotion, no matter where you are, I will be there before you. Pray sincerely and I will grant whatever it is you wish. In a moment, I must depart to meet the Blessed One Akṣobhya in the land of Abhirati. Here is the final testament I said I would give: After I have died, of my possessions that you know about, give this staff and these robes to Rechungpa who will reach here soon. They will create a positive connection for his meditation on the subtle winds. Do not touch my corpse until Rechungpa arrives. This hat of Lord Maitrīpa and this black aloe wood staff will create a positive connection for preserving the teaching through excellent view and meditation. Be sure to give them to Üpa Tönpa. Zhiwa Ö, take this wooden bowl. Ngandzongpa, take this skull cup. Seban Repa, take this flint and steel. Drigom Repa, take this bone spoon. The other disciples I have taught, take a bit of this robe. These are nothing of great value, but they each will create a positive connection.

"Now here is the main part of my testament regarding the possessions no one knows about, but which should be told to my resident disciples, lay followers, and all other fortunate individuals. Hidden beneath this hearth lies all the gold I, Milarepa, have amassed during the course of my life together with a letter describing how to divide it. Read the letter after I have died and follow its directions.

"Regarding your manner of practice, these days there are some people who have great merit and take pride in being good dharma practitioners but whose sole motivation is their advancement in this life. They give away a hundred things, some useful and some not, in order to receive a thousand in return. Ordinary people secretly give sway to their mental afflictions even though it shames those with the wisdom eye. Although they make great effort in virtuous practice that looks with suspicion upon temporal affairs, without giving up their love of such things they mix good food with poison and then eat it. You must not consume the poisoned water of desire for fame in this life. Abandon all activities in the world that are for achieving one's own worldly aims even if they are called dharma, and exert yourself in the practice of virtue."

The *repas* asked, "Is it permissible to undertake some minor activities in the world if they benefit others?"

The Jetsün replied, "It is permissible if there is not the slightest inclination for one's own desires, but that is difficult. Those who hanker after the things of this life are unable to benefit even themselves, much less others. That would be like a man drowning in a swift current saying he would save another drowning man. Until you have realized the abiding nature of things, do not act hastily to benefit others. That would be like the blind leading the blind and you would risk being swept away by desires. There will be no end to sentient beings for as long as space endures, so if you are able to practice, the time will come for you to benefit beings. Until then, aspire to attain buddhahood in order to benefit all sentient beings, holding others more dearly than oneself. Be humble in conduct. Wear ragged clothes. Renounce all thoughts of food, clothing, or conversation. Practice while enduring physical hardship and mental adversity. This itself will benefit sentient beings. In order to set yourself upon the path to practice, keep all of this in mind." Then he sang this song:

I bow at the feet of Lord Marpa the Translator.
Those who wish to practice dharma:

Without relying on a qualified lama,
Though you have devotion, blessings are meager.

Without requesting profound initiation,
The very words of tantra will trap you.

Without using the tantras as an authority,
Every deed you do leads you astray.

Without meditating on profound heart-instructions,
Saying you'll renounce only harms yourself.

Without applying remedies for mental afflictions,
Your talk is dried-up empty sound.

Without knowing the profound path of means,
Although you make effort, little is done.

Without knowing the profound essential points,
Although you endure, the path becomes long.

Without garnering vast stores of merit,
Living for oneself alone is the cause of life's round.

Without giving up what you have earned for the dharma,
Although you meditate, good qualities will not appear.

Without feeling contentment within,
Your beloved possessions become riches for others.

Without feeling happiness within,
External pleasure is a source of misery.

Without taming the demon of ambition,
Thirst for fame brings dissension and defeat;
Craving good stirs up the five poisonous afflictions;
Desiring things separates you from dear friends.
Self-importance is the cause of much resentment.

Keep quiet and you're free from disagreement.
Guard non-distraction and you're free from diversion.
Remain alone and you meet with companions.
Keep yourself lowly and you'll reach the high ground.
Keep a slow pace and you'll swiftly arrive.
Give up all action and you'll reap great rewards.
Guard the profound path and you'll complete the quick path.

If you realize emptiness, compassion arises.
If compassion arises, there is no self and other.
If there's no self and other, beings' aims are fulfilled.
If beings' aims are fulfilled, you'll encounter me.
If you encounter me, you'll attain buddhahood.

Myself, the buddha, and disciples, these three:
I pray they become one, inseparably.

When he finished, the Jetsün added, "I do not know if I shall live much longer. Now that you have listened to me, do as I have done. Follow my example! Follow my example!" Then he rested in a deep state of even meditation. Thus having reached his eighty-fourth year, at sunrise on the fourteenth day of the last winter month of the wood-hare year, under the constellation Ashlesha, the great Jetsün demonstrated the act of dissolving his physical body into the sphere of reality.

At that time, signs that the gods and *ḍākinīs* had gathered were even more widespread and wondrous than before. Everyone looking into the clear sky perceived what seemed to be a checkered pattern drawn with rainbow lights. In the center of each square was a multicolored eight-petaled lotus flower in which the petals of the four cardinal directions were the four principal colors. Upon each lotus flower stood a mandala even more beautiful and marvelous than those designed or painted by skilled artisans. In the space around them appeared a limitless expanse of offerings, five-colored rainbows and clouds taking the form of umbrellas and victory banners, curtains and canopies, ribbons and tassels, streamers and banners, and the like. A great shower of flowers in all shapes and colors fell. Stupas

formed from five-colored clouds adorned the mountain peaks and each of their pinnacles bowed in the direction of Chubar. Melodious songs of praise set to pleasing music and the fragrant scent of finest incense permeated the air. Everyone spread out across the ground witnessed such things. Many people saw gods and *ḍākinīs* bearing numerous welcome gifts and then offering them. Humans did not look upon the naked bodies of the gods as improper, and the gods were not affected by the unpleasant odor of the humans. Humans and divine beings conversed among themselves and entertained each other. These marvelous signs continued until the funerary rites were completed.

At this point, patrons from Nyanam heard news of the Jetsün's death and went to Chubar, where they demanded that the senior heart-disciples and patrons from Drin allow the corpse to be transported to Nyanam. The patrons from Drin refused and began preparations for the cremation. The men from Nyanam said, "In that case, postpone the cremation until all the patrons from Nyanam have come to view the corpse." Then they quickly departed for home, and returned with a band of men to fight for the body.

The senior disciples attempted to settle the dispute, saying, "The patrons from Nyanam and Drin are all equally devoted to the Jetsün. However, since he died at Chubar, it is not proper that the corpse be transported to Nyanam. The people of Nyanam should remain here until the body is cremated. Then the relics will be evenly distributed to everyone."

But the men of Nyanam thought their forces were greater. As they prepared to fight, a divine youth appeared in the sky at the center of a halo of rainbow light and, in the Jetsün's own voice, sang this song:

> O students and patrons assembled here
> Quarreling over this corpse:
> Listen to my proclamation.
> I, a divine youth, the Jetsün's disciple,
> Shall end this dispute and pass judgment.
> The mind of Milarepa, best of men,
> Dissolved into the unborn reality body,

Since there's no body apart from the mind,
If no physical relics come forth
When form body dissolves into reality body,
Quarreling over a corpse is just stupid.
All of you stupid people
Quarrel over Milarepa's corpse.
Quarreling will not obtain it,
But pray with devotion, you'll get it.
If you pray from the depths of your heart,
Though he be the unborn reality body,
His aspirations will rain down unceasing compassion.
Thus, in accord with your personal merits,
You all shall gain shares of the physical relics.

The youth then vanished like a rainbow fading away. Overjoyed at the thought that they had seen the Jetsün, the lay followers set aside their dispute and prayed to him. The senior disciples and the inhabitants of Drin no longer thought that the corpse would be taken away from them. But at the same time, the people of Nyanam believed that they had obtained the corpse, which they cremated upon the spot called Garuḍa Egg at the great Düdül Puk in Lapchi. Signs such as canopies of rainbow light, a rain of flowers, beautiful fragrances, and pleasing music all appeared, exactly as they had at Chubar.

Meanwhile, the heart-disciples and lay followers prayed over the corpse at Drin. When six days had passed, they examined the body and found that it had taken the form of an eight-year-old youth, radiant with light like the countenance of a divine child. The senior heart-disciples discussed the matter and decided that Jetsün Rechungpa was not coming. They agreed that if the corpse were left any longer, they would risk being left with no physical relics to serve as a basis for their offerings and prayers. It would therefore be best to perform the cremation right away. His face was shown to all and then the corpse was placed in a cremation chamber constructed upon a stone at Driché Puk that had served as a seat for giving dharma teachings. The disciples constructed a mandala of colored sand and arranged the finest offerings available to humans, surpassed

only by the materials presented by celestial beings. The funerary rituals began before daybreak but when the pyre was lit the corpse would not burn.

At that moment, wisdom *ḍākinīs* of the five classes appeared in the sky amid a pavilion of clouds and rainbow light, and in a single voice they sang this song:

> *Raṃ.* Since this person ever meditated on
> Wisdom-yogic heat, divine fire,
> What use is karmic fire?
>
> Since he ever meditated on his body with its attributes
> In the form of a celestial being,
> What corporeal collection could remain today?
>
> Since the mandala of graceful deities
> Is complete within the yogin's frame,
> What use are drawings made of sand?
>
> Since the lamp of subtle wind and mind inseparable
> Blazes on unceasingly,
> What use are paltry butter lamps?
>
> Since without a break he took his fill
> Of a diet of the five ambrosias,
> For whom do you bring sacrificial food?
>
> Since wearing the mantle of pure discipline
> He purified imprints of the two obscurations,
> On whom will you use the cleansing water vase today?
>
> Since smoky cloudbanks suffused with the scent of incense
> And offering mandalas fill the sky,
> There is no need to light incense today.
>
> The four classes of *ḍākinīs* sing offering songs
> And the wisdom *ḍākis* make offerings.
> How will you perform rituals today?

The masters of awareness are gathered around
And the heroes are rendering service.
There is no point in touching the body today.

With the corpse of a man who realized reality
There is no need for adornment—just let it be.

With an object of worship for all gods and men
There is no need for owners—do virtuous practice.

With commitments of deity and lama
There is no need for advice—guard your practice.

With a treasure heap of Precious Jewels
Do not be possessive—rest yourselves evenly.

With the secret instructions of the lama, a buddha,
Do not talk about them—just remain silent.

With the oral instructions, the *ḍākinīs*' breath
Remain in retreat lest they become defiled.

With a life of one-pointed practice
Practice in secret lest obstacles rise.

With the inheritance of the wondrous father
Achievements will emerge—have no doubt.

With the life story of the lama Jetsün
He is known far and wide—there's no need to proclaim it.

With the songs of the wisdom *ḍākinīs*
Blessings emerge—engender devotion.

In the disciple line of Milarepa
Accomplished masters are many, O worthy ones all.

Upon the residents and livestock here in this region,
No epidemics shall fall, O humans and gods.

Among sentient beings here gathered today
None are bound for the lower realms, O transmigrators all.

In the mandala of thusness,
Appearances and mind are one. Break duality's grip.

In the words of the Jetsün's final testament
There lies great significance. Practice accordingly.

May all of you ever engage in the practice
Of dharma divine, which is happiness and joy.

Then Ngandzong Repa said, "The Jetsün advised that we not touch the corpse until Rechungpa arrives, and that is in agreement with the *ḍākinīs'* song. But we do not know if Rechungpa is coming and the body may soon disappear altogether."

Repa Zhiwa Ö added, "Based upon the songs of the Jetsün and the *ḍākinīs,* and the fact that the corpse would not burn, it is certain that Jetsün Rechungpa will soon be here. Until then, we should offer our prayers," which they did.

At that time, Rechungpa was staying at the hermitage of Lorodol. Late one night he experienced a combination of dreaming and luminosity. In this state he had a vision that, at Chubar, *ḍākinīs* held aloft a crystal stupa filling the sky with light and prepared to transport it to a pure realm. The ground was filled with people, headed by his vajra brothers and sisters and the Jetsün's patrons, and the sky was filled with gods and *ḍākinīs,* all of whom were singing melodies and presenting an inconceivable array of offerings.

As Rechungpa likewise offered prostrations to the stupa, the Jetsün leaned out from within the chamber and said, "Rechungpa my son, although you did not come when I called you, I am delighted that father and son have met in this way. I do not know if we shall meet many more times, so let us appreciate the rarity of this meeting and talk." He repeatedly caressed Rechungpa's head and expressed his pleasure. Rechungpa thus understood the rarity of their encounter and was filled with a sense of devotion he had never felt before.

Then Rechungpa awoke. He recalled what the lama had said and wondered if he might already have passed away. Praying with a feeling of unbearable devotion, he thought that he must go quickly to meet the lama even though it might be too late. At that moment, two women appeared in the sky and said, "Rechungpa, if you do not go quickly to meet the lama, he will depart for a pure celestial realm and you will not see him again in this life. Go now."

The sky then filled with rainbow light and, inspired by this vision, he felt a great longing for the lama. "I must leave at once," he thought, and then he departed just as the cocks of Lorodol were crowing. Within a state of deep devotion toward his master, he took control of the subtle winds and departed to meet the lama like an arrow shot by a master archer. Thus in a single morning he covered the distance a traveler riding a donkey would take two months to traverse. He reached the summit of Pozé Pass on the border between Dingri and Drin just as the sun was rising. As he rested there for a while, he saw an expansive display of wonderful signs permeating the sky, the mountaintops, and the valleys below. These filled him with both joy and sorrow at the same time. On the summit of Jowo Razang there was a tent made from clouds of rainbow light. Inside were countless divine youths, male and female, bearing offerings pleasing to the five senses, bowing their heads and making prostrations in the direction of Chubar, and intoning prayers.

This filled Jetsün Rechungpa with apprehension and he asked divine beings, "What is the significance of these wonderful signs, and to whom are you presenting these offerings?"

Several of the goddesses replied, "Have you been hiding with your eyes and ears closed? All these signs are the virtuous celestial beings presenting offerings to the most sublime object of worship for all gods and humans anywhere in the world, Mila Zhepa Dorjé, who has departed for a pure celestial realm. Humans have also assembled at Chubar and are making offerings there."

When he heard this, Rechungpa felt as if his heart were being torn out and he quickly set off. Alongside the path leading

down to Chubar there was a boulder shaped like the base of a stupa. Suddenly, the Jetsün appeared on top of this rock and said, "Has my son Rechungpa now come?" while he repeatedly showed his pleasure, just as in the dream.

Rechungpa thought, "It is not true that the Jetsün has died," and overjoyed, he touched the lama's feet to his head and performed prostrations, while the lama answered all of his questions.

Then the Jetsün said, "Rechungpa my son, come follow me. I will get ready to welcome you." He went on ahead and in an instant was gone.

Rechungpa continued along the path. When he reached Chubar he saw the resident disciples, students, and lay followers assembled at the Jetsün's cave, presenting offerings to the corpse in a deep state of grief. Several young *repas* who did not recognize Rechungpa prevented him from approaching the body. Anguished by this, he sang to the lama this song of the sevenfold worship in a sorrowful melody:

Lord, three-times buddhas, protector of beings,
From the depths of your great compassion and wisdom
Listen please to these lamentations
Of me, your unfortunate servant, Rechung Dordrak.
Ay, here is my song of sadness, dear lama.

Longing to meet with the father, I set out to find him.
But lacking in merit, the son did not see his face.
Look upon me with compassion, my father so kind.

To you lord, in essence the three-times buddhas,
Endowed with all wisdom, power, and love,
This beggar bows down and pays homage.

I offer my practice of your instructions.
I disclose my sins of wrong view and non-virtue.
I rejoice in your unsurpassed deeds.
I beg that you turn the wheel of profound dharma,
And remain without passing into transcendence.

I dedicate the virtuous roots of my meditation
To the completion of the Jetsün's intentions.
With this dedication, may I the unfortunate one
See the face of the Jetsün's corpse.

Once I was held in the lama's favor.
Now I cannot even honor his corpse.
Though I haven't the fortune to see him alive,
At least may I see the face of his corpse.
And when I encounter the face of his corpse,
Either in fact or in vision,
I request the precious instructions for clearing obstructions
While practicing tantra's two stages.

If the father protects not with love his poor son,
Who offers this heartfelt prayer,
Then whom will his wisdom and love protect?

Father, look with compassion from invisible space
Without losing your hook of compassion.

Lord, look with compassion that knows the three times
Upon your poor servant, Rechungpa the dolt.

Father, look with compassion endowed with five wisdoms
Upon Rechungpa, tormented by five bitter poisons.

In general, look with compassion upon all sentient beings.
In particular, look with compassion upon me, Rechungpa.

While Rechungpa offered his lamentation, the corpse regained the radiance it had lost and then became engulfed in flames. As soon as they heard Rechungpa's voice, his vajra brothers including Repa Zhiwa Ö, Ngandzong Tönpa, and Seban Repa, as well as the lay followers, came forward to greet him. But Rechungpa was so hurt by the young disciples who had not recognized him and prevented him from approaching the corpse that he would not move until he finished his song.

By virtue of Rechungpa's sorrowful tune, so filled with devotion, the great Jetsün, who had already dissolved into luminosity, rose once again and spoke. To the young *repas* he said, "You must not speak as you have done. One lion is better than a hundred replicas. Rechungpa is such a one so send him forward." To Rechungpa he said, "Rechung my son, you need not despair at such trifle. Rather than take offense, come to your father."

At that moment everyone was elated, filled with wonder and amazement. Rechungpa clutched the Jetsün and burst into tears as he swooned in a state of luminosity. When he regained consciousness, he found all of the resident disciples and followers seated in front of the cremation chamber. The Jetsün was free from illness and appeared in the form of a unified vajra body, suppressing the flames with his hand. He sat in the middle of an eight-petaled lotus, his body like the anther of a flower, one foot drawn in, the other loosely set out in front, his right hand extended in the gesture of teaching dharma pressing down the flames and his left hand touching his cheek. To the disciples he said, "Listen to this response to Rechungpa's song, this old man's final words." Then from within the cremation chamber, he gave the last of his songs from the vajra body, and sang this song of the six essential points:

Listen to this song of my final instructions,
Rechungpa, son dear to my heart.

In the ocean of life's round, all its three realms
The heaped-up illusory body is a terrible sinner—
Constantly striving for clothing and food that it craves,
It has no chance to relinquish worldly affairs.
Rechungpa, relinquish worldly affairs.

In the city of the illusory body
Insubstantial mind is a great sinner—
Constantly led by the flesh-and-blood body,
It has no chance to realize reality's truth.
Rechungpa, discern the nature of mind.

On the boundary between mind and matter
Self-arising wisdom is a great sinner—
Constantly moving toward fleeting conditions,
It has no chance to realize the unborn truth.
Rechungpa, seize the stronghold of the unborn.

On the boundary between this life and the next
Intermediate-state consciousness is a great sinner—
Constantly seeking the body it lacks,
It has no chance to realize the way things are.
Rechungpa, determine the way things are.

In the city of the deceptive six realms
Lies a mass of bad karma, evil deeds, and obscurations—
Constantly drawn by attachment and aversion,
They have no chance to realize equanimity.
Rechungpa, abandon attachment and aversion.

In the invisible realm of the heavens
Lies a perfected buddha's imposter—
Constantly teaching deceptive provisional meaning,
It has not the chance to realize definitive meaning.
Rechungpa, abandon conventional designations.

Lama, chosen deity, *ḍākinī,* these three—
Pray to them together as one.

View, meditation, and action, these three—
Practice them together as one.

This life, the next, and the in-between, these three—
Acquaint yourself with them together as one.

This is the last among all of my oral instructions.
This is my final testament's end.
Rechungpa, other than this there is nothing to say.
Put it in practice, dear father's son.

When he finished this song, he once more dissolved into luminosity. At that moment the cremation pyre transformed into a celestial mansion made of rainbow light, square with four gateways, each with an ornamented portico, above which hovered a tent and canopy of rainbow light. Upon the roof coping stood umbrellas, victory banners, and countless other offerings. The flames at the base took the form of an eight-petaled lotus, and the petal-tips were emblazoned with the eight auspicious symbols, the seven royal emblems, and other offerings. Sparks swirled in the form of goddesses bearing and setting forth many objects of worship, while the crackling of the blaze sounded like the sweet music of lutes, flutes, hand drums, and other instruments. The smoke emitted wonderful scents and converged as cloudbanks of various kinds, such as umbrellas and victory banners, all made of rainbow light.

At the same time, gods and goddesses in the sky above the cremation chamber held aloft vases from which flowed a steady stream of nectar and offerings of the five senses, worthy of human and divine praise, and satisfying to all.

All of the resident disciples and lay followers beheld the cremation chamber as a celestial mansion. The corpse, however, appeared to them variously in the form of Hevajra, Cakrasaṃvara, Guhyasamāja, Vajravārāhī, and so forth. Then the host of *ḍākinīs* sang this song with one voice:

With the loss of the wish granting jewel, our lord,
Some weep, while some swoon and fall faint.
But in this, their moment of grieving,
A spontaneous fire ignites on its own,
Its flames take the form of an eight-petaled lotus,
Emblazoned with auspicious symbols, royal emblems,
And all manner of delightful objects of worship.
Their crackling resounds with sweet music of symbols and horns,
Lutes, flutes, and hand chimes,
Hand drums and other small drums.
Sparks swirled about and then took on the form of
Goddesses, outer, inner, and secret,
Presenting a lovely array of myriad offerings.

The smoke comes together in cloudbanks of rainbow light
Forming pennants, umbrellas, and victory banners,
Knots of good fortune and swastikas.
A great host of beautiful goddesses
Carried away the cremation relics.
Of the physical body, nothing remains,
So your cremation of the corpse is now finished.
In the sky, the reality body lama,
There gather dharma clouds, the enjoyment body aspiration prayers,
And a shower of flowers, the emanation body enlightened activity,
Rains down unceasingly
And ripens the harvest, future disciples.
Reality, free from any birth whatsoever,
Is unborn emptiness.
Emptiness is itself without birth or cessation.
And birth and cessation themselves are emptiness.
Since this is so, give up all doubts and uncertainty.

After this song ended, when day had passed into night and the blaze had died down, the cremation chamber appeared completely transparent inside and out. The resident disciples and lay followers all looked at the bodily remains and beheld a variety of unimaginable sights. Some saw a stupa of light inside the cremation chamber. Others saw the forms of deities such as Hevajra, Cakrasaṃvara, Guhyasamāja, and Vajravārāhī; or hand implements such as a vajra, bell, and vase; or seed syllables such as those for body, speech, and mind. Others saw the cremation chamber filled with light, filled with a mass of pure gold, with swirling water, with blazing fire, with blowing wind, or with nothing at all. Still others saw it filled with offerings of the five senses.

The resident disciples and lay followers opened the entrance to the interior of the cremation cell. Then they all rested their heads beside the chamber and fell asleep with the joyful anticipation that a great many wondrous objects of devotion would manifest in the form of corporeal relics.

At dawn, Rechungpa awoke to a vision of *ḍākinīs* of the five classes, draped in silken garments and adorned with ornaments

of bone and jewels, each surrounded by a retinue of goddesses of their respective colors: blue, yellow, red, green, and white. They held aloft innumerable offerings of the five senses and presented them before the cremation chamber. The central goddesses had shrouded the cremation chamber with white silk scarves and were removing a sphere of white light from its interior. Rechungpa was captivated by this spectacle, but then thought the *ḍākinīs* might be carrying away the remains and relics. As he went over to the cell, the *ḍākinīs* flew off into the sky. He roused his vajra brethren and fellow practitioners. When they peered into the cremation chamber, they found everything had been swept away so that not even a trace of ash remained. Disheartened, Rechungpa said to the *ḍākinīs,* "We must have a share of the relics."

The *ḍākinīs* replied, "If the remains and relics of mind identified as reality body is not enough for you, the great sons, you should pray to the Jetsün and he will grant you something out of his compassion. As for everyone else who regarded the Jetsün like a firefly, even though he shone like the sun and moon, they shall receive no remains or relics. The relics belong to us."

As the *ḍākinīs* hovered in the sky, Rechungpa saw the truth of what they had said and he sang this supplication with a melody of heartfelt longing:

Lord, when you lived with your lama
You faithfully carried out all his commands
And thereby received profound oral instructions.
You then ripened and liberated worthy disciples.
Grant us remains and relics, objects for our devotion.
Embrace with compassion all sentient beings.

Lord, when you lived alone in the mountains
You were fiercely determined in meditation
And thus manifested miraculous signs of achievement.
This spread your fame far and wide.
Grant us remains and relics, objects for our devotion.
Embrace with compassion all those who have seen or heard you.

Lord, when you lived with disciples
You were filled with compassion for all without bias.
Higher perception and the wisdom of pristine awareness unfolded.
You felt loving-kindness for the welfare of beings.
Grant us remains and relics, objects for our devotion.
Embrace with compassion your worthy disciples.

Lord, when you lived in the midst of great crowds
You were filled with a kindness that increased your enlightened
attitude.
You led all those you met to the path of release.
You cared most for all those afflicted by misery.
Grant us remains and relicts, objects for our devotion.
Embrace with compassion all those who are feeble.

Lord, when you shed your illusory body
You were a yogin who reached the celestial realms.
You transformed all that exists into the reality body
And became supreme lord of *ḍākinīs*.
Grant us remains and relics, objects for our devotion.
Embrace with compassion your children assembled here.

When Rechungpa finished this supplication in a melody of heartfelt longing and lamentation, a relic the size of a hen's egg descended from the sphere of light within the *ḍākinīs*' hands and rested above the cremation chamber, radiating five-colored rays of light. The senior disciples stretched their hands out shouting, "It's mine," each attempting to claim it for himself. The relic then returned to the heavens where it dissolved into the sphere of light in the *ḍākinīs*' hands. The sphere of light then split into two parts. One took the form of a lion throne surmounted by lotus, sun, and moon cushions. The other, resting upon the first, became a crystal stupa about one arm-span in height, transparent inside and out, radiating five-colored rays of light, and surrounded at its pinnacle by the thousand and two buddhas. On its steps stood, in succession, assemblies of deities of the four classes of tantra, all in vivid and clear detail. Inside rested an image of the Jetsün about one hand-span

in height. Two *ḍākinīs* guarding the stupa, accompanied by other *ḍākinīs* who were offering prostrations, sang this song:

Sons Dewa Kyong and Zhiwa Ö,
Ngandzong Tönpa and the rest
Of the worthy *repa* disciples
Called out the name of their father
With fervent devotion and yearning.
"Please grant for all sentient beings," they said,
"Remains and relics, objects for our devotion."
Through the power of this heartfelt prayer and my compassion,
This object, the three bodies emanating through the master's
compassion, appeared.
Having seen it you will no longer fall into life's round.
If you generate faith you will then attain perfect awakening.

Within the reality body's singular sphere
Lies this relic, the size of a hen's egg,
An object for all beings' devotion.
You won't get it by saying, "It's mine."
How could it last in a mundane locale?
If you offer up prayers
Its compassion will never diminish.
Such is the general pledge of the buddhas.

The chosen deity Cakrasaṃvara and consort
Ḍressed in ornaments of charnel-ground bones
Appear complete in their mandala in the sky.
Offerings of heroes and heroines are laid out like clouds.
The perfect enjoyment body wisdom deities
Grant initiation; accomplishments will quickly emerge.
If you are able to offer them prayers
Their blessings will never diminish.
Such is the general pledge of the *ḍākinīs*.

The activities of the Sage, the reality body,
Reveal emanation bodies everywhere.
The crystal stupa, one arm-span in height,

Is laid out with the thousand and two buddhas of the sutras
And the four classes of tantra.
How amazing that they actually appear.
If you are able to offer them prayers without distraction
Their enlightened activity will never diminish.
Such is the general pledge of the dharma protectors.

The lama, three bodies inseparable,
Reveals miraculous forms everywhere.
That his small but lifelike figure
Directly appears—how amazing.
If you are able to offer him prayers from your heart
With fervent devotion and yearning
Accomplishments will never diminish.
Such is the general pledge of all adepts.

When you closely guard your commitments
All those bound under oath will grant feats.

When you remain alone in mountain retreats
Mother goddesses and *ḍākinīs* gather round.

When you refrain from deceit in the dharma
It's a portent of rapid accomplishment.

When you lack desire for happiness inside
It's the uprooting of afflictions' roots.

When you cling neither to self nor to objects
It's the slaying of obstructing spirits.

When you lack discrimination or prejudice
It's pristine view.

When you let life's round and transcendence emerge as empty
It's pristine meditation.

When you let yogic conduct emerge from within
It's pristine conduct.

When you carry out the lama's prophetic command
It's pristine commitment.

When you accomplish the aims of all beings
It's pristine result.

When the minds of master and disciple are intermingled
It's pristine connection.

When you witness the signs and accomplishments
It's pristine perception.

Commitments, experience, signs of warmth, and
the dharma,
Take these, my sons, as your share of the relics.

When this song was finished, the *ḍākinīs* showed the stupa to the disciples and then, placing it on a jeweled throne, they prepared to transport it to a distant pure land. Repa Zhiwa Ö thought he should request that the *ḍākinīs* leave the stupa as an object of worship for the human disciples who were assembled. So once again, he offered this supplication with a melody of heartfelt longing:

Emanation in human form helping others,
Yogin of complete enjoyment,
Reality body pervading the invisible sphere of reality—
I pray to you father, O lord.
The stupa the *ḍākinīs* hold in their hands,
Give it to us your children I beg.

Lord, when you met with accomplished masters
You were like a casket of jewels and gold,
A yogin of incomparable value—
I pray to you lord, completely pure.
The stupa the *ḍākinīs* hold in their hands,
Give it to us your children I beg.

Lord, when you were serving your lama
You were like the white fleece of a sheep,
A yogin who benefits all—
I pray to you, compassionate one.
The stupa the *ḍākinīs* hold in their hands,
Give it to us your children I beg.

Lord, when you renounced worldly deeds
You were like the king of the sages,
A yogin of steadfast resolve—
I pray to you, resolute one.
The stupa the *ḍākinīs* hold in their hands,
Give it to us your children I beg.

Lord, when you practiced the lama's instructions
You were like a tigress feeding on a human corpse,
A yogin without hesitation—
I pray to you, perseverant one.
The stupa the *ḍākinīs* hold in their hands,
Give it to us your children I beg.

Lord, when you wandered through desolate lands
You were like a seamless block of iron,
A yogin of steadfast resolve—
I pray to you, uncontrived one.
The stupa the *ḍākinīs* hold in their hands,
Give it to us your children I beg.

Lord, when you performed signs and miracles
You were like an elephant, a white snow lioness,
A yogin without anxiety—
I pray to you, fearless one.
The stupa the *ḍākinīs* hold in their hands,
Give it to us your children I beg.

Lord, when signs of experience and warmth arose
You were like the full moon's expanse,

A yogin presiding over the world—
I pray to you, unattached one.
The stupa the *ḍākinīs* hold in their hands,
Give it to us your children I beg.

Lord, when you nurtured your worthy disciples
You were like a magnifying glass under the sun,
A yogin who brought about feats—
I pray to you, most kind one.
The stupa the *ḍākinīs* hold in their hands,
Give it to us your children I beg.

Lord, when you faced material wealth
You were like mercury hitting the ground,
A yogin unsullied by taint—
I pray to you, faultless one.
The stupa the *ḍākinīs* hold in their hands,
Give it to us your children I beg.

Lord, when you nurtured the masses
You were like the sun shining over the earth,
A yogin dispelling the dark—
I pray to you, loving and wise one.
The stupa the *ḍākinīs* hold in their hands,
Give it to us your children I beg.

Lord, when worldly people visited you
You were like a mother greeting her child,
A yogin doing anything to help—
I pray to you, affectionate one.
The stupa the *ḍākinīs* hold in their hands,
Give it to us your children I beg.

Lord, when you left for the celestial realms
You were like a vase of accomplishment treasure,
A yogin satisfying all desires—
I pray to you, marvelous one.

The stupa the *ḍākinīs* hold in their hands,
Give it to us your children I beg.

Lord, when you made clairvoyant prophecy
You were like the hand meeting the mouth,
A yogin who never was wrong—
I pray to you, who knows the three times.
The stupa the *ḍākinīs* hold in their hands,
Give it to us your children I beg.

Lord, when you swiftly granted accomplishment
You were like father passing riches to son,
A yogin who never held back—
I pray to you, compassionate one.
The stupa the *ḍākinīs* hold in their hands,
Give it to us your children I beg.

When this supplication ended, the Jetsün's figure inside the stupa sang this song of dispelling various errors, in reply to Repa Zhiwa Ö's request:

O fortunate and faithful one,
Who prayed with such clear heartfelt longing,
Disciple of a wondrous *repa,* listen!

For me, Milarepa,
The all-pervasive reality body
Neither gains nor loses emptiness.
The conventional remains and relics
Of my form body that dissolved into space
Have merged into a single sphere—
A stupa blazing with light rays,
A field of merit for all beings.
It shall be kept in a pure land abode,
And maintained by the five classes of *ḍākinīs.*
Gods and *ḍākinīs* will give homage and offerings.
Kept in the human realm, it would vanish.

My disciples, as your share
Of sacred remains and relics
I've pointed out your mind as reality body.
While you are practicing this on the path
These are the various pitfalls you face.
Do not forget them and act appropriately.

Relying on a qualified lama
And relying on a person with merit:
These two seem so alike, so alike—watch out lest you mistake them.

Primordial emptiness arising in mind
And fabrications of the non-conceptual mind:
These two seem so alike, so alike—watch out lest you mistake them.

Meditation reaching the genuine ground
And fixation on the state of serenity:
These two seem so alike, so alike—watch out lest you mistake them.

The self-arising nature of spontaneous ease
And recollecting what's agreeable in life:
These two seem so alike, so alike—watch out lest you mistake them.

The naked perception of mind itself as stainless
And the well-intentioned wish to be of help:
These two seem so alike, so alike—watch out lest you mistake them.

Feats appearing by means of interdependence
And a pile of material wealth gained through merit:
These two seem so alike, so alike—watch out lest you mistake them.

Prophecies of mother goddesses and *ḍākinīs*
And the mundane call of spirits from above:
These two seem so alike, so alike—watch out lest you mistake them.

Enlightened activity carried out by *ḍākinīs*
And obstacles caused by demons:
These two seem so alike, so alike—watch out lest you mistake them.

The untainted sphere of the reality body
And ordinary material relics:
These two seem so alike, so alike—watch out lest you mistake them.

Flowers emanating from the expanse
And flowers of Desire Realm gods:
These two seem so alike, so alike—watch out lest you mistake them.

A stupa fashioned through the work of spirits
And an emanation stupa divine:
These two seem so alike, so alike—watch out lest you mistake them.

A rainbow pavilion over all that exists
And a rainbow of the natural elements:
These two seem so alike, so alike—watch out lest you mistake them.

Faith that springs up from past karmic seeds
And faith that is based on mere circumstance:
These two seem so alike, so alike—watch out lest you mistake them.

Faith arising from the depths of your heart
And faith from embarrassment and shame:
These two seem so alike, so alike—watch out lest you mistake them.

Striving to practice from the depths of your heart
And saving face before the lama for the sake of this life:
These two seem so alike, so alike—watch out lest you mistake them.

Actually carrying out one's intentions
And talk simply carried on the wind:
These two seem so alike, so alike—watch out lest you mistake them.

This stupa of mother goddesses and *ḍākinīs*
Is the pure land of the three-times buddhas,
The assembly hall of heroes and heroines,
The Jetsün lama's meditation cell.

In the pure land of the eastern quarter,
A place where a host of *ḍākinīs* gather,

In that pure land of Abhirati
The Blessed One Cakrasaṃvara,
Avalokiteśvara, and protectress Tārā assemble.
In that place of perfect bliss
A host of *ḍākinīs* await me.

If you are able to pray from the depths of your heart
Then do so with genuine tears.
Present wondrous gifts of the uncontrived state.
Shower it with flowers of keen insight.
Bathe it with the ablution vase of enlightened attitude.
With the excellent protection of unwavering faith,
If you wish to receive the initiation of non-dual wisdom
Place your head beneath the stupa.

Then the *ḍākinīs* lifted the stupa into the sky above the senior disciples. Light rays radiated from it down to the heads of each one of the disciples, thus conferring initiation. Most people saw the Jetsün's form emerge from the stupa. In the sky, some clearly saw him as the mandala of Hevajra, others Cakrasaṃvara, Guhyasamāja, or the Jetsünma, surrounded by countless gods and goddesses all of which dissolved into the heart of the central deity. The mandalas then condensed into a ball of light in the sky and sped off into the eastern quarter. *Ḍākinīs* draped the stupa in various silks and placed it in a jeweled casket and, accompanied by countless offerings and a chorus of music, they transported it off to the east.

Some others saw the Jetsün in the form of a complete enjoyment body, riding a lion adorned with ornaments. The four kinds of *ḍākinīs* supported the lion's feet while Vajravārāhī led its halter. He was surrounded by an entourage of innumerable heroes and *ḍākinīs,* who presented offerings of parasols, victory banners, and all manner of music as they proceeded toward the east. Then they saw a white *ḍākinī* carry the stupa away in a palanquin of white silk. Such were the inconceivable number of amazing and wondrous signs that appeared.

The resident disciples were distraught at being excluded from a share of the relics. As they offered fervent prayers through

their cries of lament, a disembodied voice like the Jetsün's called out from the heavens. They heard it say, "My children, you need not be so upset. For your share of the relics, there is an Amolika stone[21] upon which four letters have appeared, which is itself an object worthy of devotion. Look beneath this stone."

They searched around the rock cliff upon which the cremation had been performed and found a funerary stone exactly as foretold. Thus they were relieved of their distress at being excluded from a share of the relics. This amazing funerary stone rests to this day at the glorious hermitage of Chubar for the benefit of beings.

Although the senior disciples grieved during the Jetsün's departure for a pure land, they were certain they would be the first to be born among his retinue in whichever buddha field he occupied. They were also confident that all of the Jetsün's deeds would be of great benefit to both the teachings and sentient beings, and that their own personal practices would benefit themselves and others. They all agreed that they should now look for the gold beneath the hearth in accordance with the Jetsün's testament. "Even though in light of the Jetsün's actions there is no reason to think there will be gold, we must look since this was his command," they said.

Upon digging up the hearth they found a square piece of Kashika cotton cloth.[22] Wrapped in it was a small knife with a blunt tip, a flint steel on the back edge, and a sharp blade. There was also a piece of sugar and a letter, which they read.

At the top it said,

> When cut with this knife, the sugar and cloth will never be exhausted. Cut and distribute them to as many people as possible. Whoever tastes the sugar or touches the cloth will be liberated from the lower realms. This is because they are the food and clothing of Milarepa's meditation and have also been blessed by Victors of the past. Anyone who has developed faith upon hearing my name even once shall not be reborn in the lower realms for seven lifetimes and will remember those seven lifetimes. This is the prophecy of the Victors. Whoever says that Milarepa possessed gold, fill his mouth with shit.

Although the senior disciples were filled with sorrow and grief, this statement made them all laugh. At the bottom of the letter were these verses:

The food of meditation
That I, a yogin, ate my whole life
Is the food of compassion producing the two types of
accomplishment.
Sentient beings who place it in their mouth
Close the door to rebirth as a hungry ghost.

Those who wear on their body or around their neck
My white cotton cloth of yogic heat wisdom
Close the door to rebirth in the hot and cold hells.

All those who receive such blessings
Are saved from the three lower realms.

All those who have a dharma connection with me
Will henceforth never take birth in a lower realm,
And gradually attain perfect buddhahood.

All those beings who develop faith
Upon merely hearing my name
Will remember the names and families of seven lifetimes.

For me your old father, Milarepa,
All that exists turned to gold.
I have no need for even the slightest bit.
Children, practice according to my instructions.
This way you'll achieve your highest aims,
Both temporary and everlasting.

Thus they used the knife to cut the sugar into innumerable pieces, and each piece was as big as the original. They cut the cloth in a similar manner and then distributed it to everyone in attendance. The sick and the miserable who partook of sugar

and cloth were relieved of their misery. The evil-minded and mentally afflicted, too, felt their faith and diligence, wisdom and compassion increase. Eventually, they were liberated from the lower realms. The sugar and cloth lasted each recipient's lifetime without being exhausted.

On the day of the funerary rites a rain of flowers fell, some four colors, some five colors. The blossoms did not fall to the ground. Instead, just as they came into someone's reach, they ascended and disappeared in the sky. Most of the very few that did land on the ground disappeared as soon as they were touched, but those that remained were beautiful to behold. Blossoms with three colors, delicate as the wings of bees, lay nearly ankle deep on the ground at Chubar, and in other locations they changed the color of the earth. When the funerary rites were over, the various signs such as rainbow light in the sky grew dimmer and dimmer until they disappeared. On every anniversary of his passing away the signs appeared just as they had before: a rain of flowers, rainbow lights and fragrant scents, the sound of music and so forth, all in a perfectly clear sky. Flowers continued to bloom on the ground even during the winter months. The region enjoyed good harvests and prosperity. Disputes, epidemics, and plagues all subsided. The marvelous and wondrous signs that appeared such as these are beyond imagination and expression, even if described at length. Therefore, for fear of using too many words, I have not written much about them here.

In summary, the great and powerful lord of yogins Milarepa departed for a pure realm. Afterward, through the power of his life story's perfect example, his great compassion, and his excellent aspirations, those among his lineage of disciples who attained accomplishment were as numerous as the stars in the sky; those who attained the state of non-returning were as numerous as particles of dust; the yogins and yoginīs who entered the path were too numerous to count. He caused the teachings of the Buddha to shine like the sun. He eliminated the karmic causes and results for the temporary and lasting misery of sentient beings, and established in them the causes and effects of happiness.

This was the ninth of the supreme deeds, the deed in which the pure and enlightened activities of the powerful lord of yogins Milarepa were brought to completion. It describes how, in order to compel beings to practice dharma, he dissolved his physical body into the sphere of reality and how his extensive enlightened activities will continue to benefit beings countless in number as space is vast, until all existence comes to an end.

MILAREPA'S DISCIPLES

Among the disciples foretold to the Jetsün by his chosen deities and the *ḍākinīs,* and in accord with a dream he had at the time he met Zhiwa Ö, there were first the eight heart-sons: the incomparable Dakpo Rinpoché who was like the sun, Rechung Dorjé Drakpa of Gungtang who was like the moon, and Ngandzong Tönpa Changchup Gyaltsen of Chimlung, Repa Zhiwa Ö of Gyaltrom Mé, Seban Repa of Dotra, Khyira Repa of Nyishang, Drigom Repa of Mü, and Repa Sangyé Kyap of Ragma, who were like constellations. The thirteen close-sons were: Shengom Repa, Lengom Repa, Megom Repa, Tsapu Repa, Kharchung Repa, Rongchung Repa, Takgom Repa Dorjé Wangchuk, Jogom Repa Darma Wangchuk, Dampa Gyakpuwa, Likor Charupa, Lotön Gendün, Kyotön Śākyaguṇa, and Dretön Tashibar. The heart-son Dakpo Rinpoché and the latter five close-sons were fully ordained monks.

The four female disciples were Rechungma of Tsonga, Salé Ö of Nyanam, Peldar Bum of Chung, and his sister Peta Gönkyi. There were twenty-five yogins and yoginīs who reached the end of the grounds and paths. There were one hundred realized masters, such as Dziwo Repa, who saw the true face of reality and were like stars. There were one hundred and eight superior individuals who first gave birth to excellent meditation experience that arose spontaneously and then developed it further while also attaining warmth on the path. There were one thousand and one male and female meditators, who lived in accordance with the dharma and renounced worldly activities. There were countless ordinary people who had the fortune to become disciples who made a connection with the dharma

and thereby cut off rebirth in the lower realms. These were his human disciples. There were also innumerable non-human disciples, such as the Tsering Chenga sisters and the demon of Lingwa Drak, who were protectors of the virtuous.

When the funeral rites were completed, all the disciples who were present at the time of the Jetsün's death then departed in the ten directions, each for his or her own isolated mountain retreat. Thereafter they dedicated their lives to practice. Rechungpa took Dakpo Rinpoché's share of the lama's possessions and once again set out for Ü province. Although Gampopa was a little late, he remembered the lama's instructions and was on his way to Chubar when they met in Yarlung Pushar. Rechungpa handed over Maitrīpa's hat and the aloe wood staff to Gampopa and then told him what had transpired. Gampopa fell unconscious for a spell and when he revived he called out many grief-stricken prayers to the lama. This is described in his own biography.

Gampopa invited Rechungpa to his residence and received from him the dharma cycles of the *Cakrasaṃvara* aural transmission in their entirety. Rechungpa gave these dharma transmissions and a portion of the lama's robe, and then left for the hermitage at Lorodol where he remained. Eventually, his body departed for the celestial realms. The heart-sons Zhiwa Ö and Khyira Repa, and the female disciples Rechungma, Peldar Bum, and Salé Ö likewise had their bodies depart for the celestial realms. The others displayed the act of passing away in the usual manner, after which they departed for the celestial realms. The heart-sons were marvelous and amazing in the way their bodies departed for the celestial realms in this very life. Those who displayed the act of passing away in the usual manner left remains and relics. The excellent results of these enlightened activities brought benefits as vast as the expanse of space to both the teachings and sentient beings.

The life of Mila Zhepa Dorjé, which demonstrates the path of liberation and omniscience, is told through the framework of twelve marvelous and amazing deeds: three ordinary worldly deeds and nine supreme deeds of peace and transcendence. He was the best of men who, in one life and one body, attained the high state of the sovereign lord Vajradhara, possessing the four

bodies and five wisdoms. He then cleansed and purified all buddha fields and ripened and liberated sentient beings. May this great feast of virtue, which continuously confers the profits of both existence and peace for sentient beings everywhere, increase well-being, happiness, and good fortune.

COLOPHON

This Life of Jetsün Mila, best of men,
Shines light of gem-like perfect deeds
Brightening the teachings of all buddhas and
Fulfilling needs and hopes of all who live.
May it form the best of service, pleasing Victors of the past.

The Life is graced with embellishments, poetry beginning and end.
May it serve a feast for scholars fond of grandiloquence.

The Life's words arouse goose bumps of faith and devotion.
May it serve a feast for monks who renounce the world.

The Life's meaning reveals the two truths indivisible.
May it serve a feast for fine masters endowed with experience.

Seeing the Life, one is freed from the eight worldly concerns.
May it serve a feast for renunciates who've relinquished
attachments.

Hearing the Life, faith arises all on its own.
May it serve a feast for the fortunate endowed with good karma.

Recollecting the Life, entanglements are forcefully severed.
May it serve a feast for the omniscient, accomplished in this life.

Touching the Life, the two aims are spontaneously achieved.
May it serve a feast for doctrine holders who benefit beings.

Preserving the Life, the intent of the lineage is realized.
May it serve a feast for lineage holders who practice their master's commands.

Sympathizing with the Life protects against suffering bar none.
May it serve a feast for all beings throughout the three realms.

The source of this feast is the life of Zhepa Dorjé that crowns the victory banner of the Sage's teachings, a lapis lazuli gem endowed with the splendor and luster of the Four Immeasurables, which thus lays out for all beings a smorgasbord of delights throughout existence and peace.

Presenting it offerings of one's completely pure intention and praying that it bestow what is needed and desired, the supreme medicine of the five wisdoms rains down, serving as a panacea for those laying in the sickbed of life's round, tormented by the ailments of the five poisons.

May the supreme virtue of laying out such a feast, with delicacies like the seven riches of the Noble Ones, for sentient beings deprived of such an unsullied gem and then mired in great suffering, dispel privation for all beings throughout existence and peace.

Then in order that, by even hearing Milarepa's name, they gain in this life the state of Lord Vajradhara and then attain the power and ability to establish through innumerable incarnations all beings vast as space in the splendor of the four bodies, I dedicate such virtue—may it come to pass in just this way.

Although I have seen many biographies of the Jetsün, I Rupé Gyenchen, the yogin who wanders in charnel grounds, put into writing perfectly and completely this *Life of the Great Powerful Lord of Yogins Jetsün Milarepa, Demonstrating the Path of Liberation and Omniscience* together with a song outline just as it was recounted by an extraordinary master. It was com-

pleted in Drok Lapchi Ganggi Rawa, the great sacred site in which many mother goddesses and *ḍākinīs* dwell, on the eighth day of the middle autumn month of the Purbu year.[23] May it bring great happiness and benefit to the teachings and to sentient beings until life's round is emptied.

Appendix

Tibetan Terms

Phonetics	Tibetan transliteration
Balpo Dzong	*bal po rdzong*
Bari Lotsawa	*ba ri lo tsa ba*
Begtsé Döyön Dzong	*be rtse 'dod yon rdzong*
Bepuk Mamo Dzong	*sbas phug ma mo rdzong*
Bharima	*bha ri ma*
Bonpori	*bon po ri*
Chaktsal Gang	*phyag 'tshal sgang*
Changchup Dzong	*byang chub rdzong*
Chimlung	*lcim lung*
Chölagang	*chos la sgang*
Chonglung Drak	*mchong lung brag*
Chonglung Kyungi Dzong	*mchong lung khyung gi rdzong*
Choro	*co ro*
Chubar	*chu bar*
Chung	*gcung*
Chungpachi	*gcung pa spyi*
Chuzang	*chu bzang*
Dakmema	*bdag med ma*
Dakpo	*dwags po*
Dakpo Lharjé	*dwags po lha rje*
Dampa Gyakpuwa	*dam pa rgyags phu ba*
Darma Dodé	*dar ma mdo sde*
Darma Wangchuk	*dar ma dbang phyug*
Dawö Zhönu	*zla 'od gzhon nu*
Dingri	*ding ri*
Dol	*dol*
Dolpa Nakpo	*gdol pa nag po*

Dotön Sengé	*mdo ston seng ge*
Dotra	*mdo bkra*
Drakar Taso	*brag dkar rta so*
Drakmar Poto	*brag dmar spo mtho*
Drakya Dorjé Dzong	*brag skya rdo rje rdzong*
Dretön Tashibar	*'dre ston bkra shis 'bar*
Driché Puk	*'bri lce phug*
Drigom Repa	*'bri sgom ras pa*
Drin	*brin*
Dritsé	*'bri rtse*
Drodé Tashigang	*spro bde bkra shis sgang*
Dröpa Puk	*grod pa phug*
Drö Puk	*grod phug*
Drowolung	*gro bo lung*
Düdül Puk	*bdud 'dul phug*
Dümo Takdren	*bdud mo stag 'dren*
Düsol Lhamo	*dud sol lha mo*
Dzesé	*mdzes se*
Dzesé Bum	*mdzes se 'bum*
Dziwo Repa	*rdzi bo ras pa*
dzo	*mdzo*
Dzutrul Puk	*rdzu 'phrul phug*
Gampopa	*sgam po pa*
Gang Tisé	*gangs ti se*
Gepalesum	*gad pa sle gsum*
Geshé	*dge shes*
Geshé Tsakpuwa	*dge shes rtsag phu ba*
Gönmokyi	*mgon mo skyid*
Gungtang	*gung thang*
Gyal	*rgyal*
Gyalgi Śrī	*rgyal gi shrī*
Gyaltrom Mé	*rgyal khrom smad*
Gyatrak Namkha Dzong	*rgya brag nam mkha' dzong*
Gyiling	*gyi ling*
Jayul	*bya yul*
Jetsün	*rje btsun*
Jogom Repa Darma Wangchuk	*jo sgom ras pa dar ma dbang phyug*
Josey	*jo sras*
Jowo Razang	*jo bo ra bzangs*
Kagyu	*bka' brgyud*
Kangtsuk Puk	*rkang tshugs phug*

Kharchen Ötro	*skar chen 'od 'phro*
Kharchung Repa	*mkhar chung ras pa*
Karmo Gyen	*dkar mo rgyan*
Kazhi Dunggyé	*ka bzhi gdung brgyad*
Kham	*khams*
Khandroling	*mkha' 'gro gling*
Khokhom	*kho khom*
Khuchuk Wenpa Dzong	*khu byug dben pa rdzong*
Khyira Repa	*khyi ra ras pa*
Khyungpo	*khyung po*
Khyungtsa Paldren	*khyung tsha dpal 'dren*
Könchok Lhabum	*dkon mchog lha 'bum*
Kongpo	*kong po*
Koré	*ko re*
Kutang	*ku thang*
Kyangatsa	*skya rnga rtsa*
Kyangpen Namkha Dzong	*rkyang phan nam mkha' rdzong*
Kyipa Nyima Dzong	*skyid pa nyi ma rdzong*
Kyipuk Nyima Dzong	*skyid phug nyi ma rdzong*
Kyorpo	*skyor po*
Kyotön Śākyaguṇa	*skyo ston shā kya gu na*
Lama	*bla ma*
Langgo Ludü Dzong	*glang mgo klu bdud rdzong*
Lapchi	*la phyi*
Lapchi Gangi Rawa	*la phyi gangs kyi ra ba*
Lapchi Gangra	*la phyi gangs ra*
Lapuk Padma Dzong	*la phug pad ma rdzong*
Latö	*la stod*
Leksé Bum	*legs se 'bum*
Lengom Repa	*glan sgom ras pa*
Lezhing	*las zhing*
Lhadro	*lha bro*
Lharjé Yangngé	*lha rje g.yang nge*
Lhundrup	*lhun grub*
Likor Charupa	*li skor phya ru pa*
Ling	*gling*
Lingwa Drak	*ling ba brag*
Lingwa Drakmar Dzong	*ling ba brag dmar rzdong*
Longda	*glong mda'*
Lorodol	*lo ro dol*
Lotön Gendün	*lo ston dge 'dun*
Lowo	*glo bo*

Lugyé Khen	*klu brgyad mkhan*
Lukdzi Repa	*lug rdzi ras pa*
Mangyul	*mang yul*
Marpa	*mar pa*
Marpa Golek	*mar pa mgo legs*
Megom Repa	*mes sgom ras pa*
Metön Tsönpo	*mes ston tshon po*
Milarepa	*mi la ras pa*
Minkyük Dripma Dzong	*smin khyugs/khyud grib ma rdzong*
Mithögeka	*mi thod gad kha*
Mü	*mus*
Nagtra	*gnag khra*
Nar	*snar*
Naro Bönchung	*na ro bon chung*
Ngandzong Repa	*ngan rdzong ras pa*
Ngari Korsum	*mnga' ris skor gsum*
Ngokpa	*rngog pa*
Ngoktön Chödor	*rngog ston chos rdor*
Ngulbum	*dngul 'bum*
Nokmo	*snog mo*
Nup Khulung	*gnubs khu lung*
Nyak	*gnyag*
Nyanam	*gnya' nam*
Nyang	*myang*
Nyangtö	*myang stod*
Nyangtsa Kargyen	*myang rtsa dkar rgyan*
Nyanyön Puk	*snyan g.yon phug*
Nyima Latö	*nyi ma la stod*
Nyingma	*rnying ma*
Nyishang	*gnyi shangs*
Nyishang Gurta	*gnyi shangs 'gur rta*
Omchung	*'om chung*
Orma	*'or ma*
Ösal Puk	*'od gsal phug*
Palku	*dpal khud*
Peldar Bum	*dpal dar 'bum*
Pel Shepa Dorjé	*dpal bzhad pa rdo rje*
Peta	*pe ta*
Peta Gönkyi	*pe ta mgon skyid*
Poto Namkha Dzong	*spo mtho nam mkha' rdzong*
Pozé	*spo ze*

Pukrön Puk	*phug ron phug*
Purang	*pu rangs*
Ragma	*rag ma*
Ragma Changchup Dzong	*rag ma byang chub rdzong*
Rala	*ra la*
Ramding Nampukma	*ram sdings gnam phug ma*
Rechungma	*ras chung ma*
Rechungpa Dorjé Drak	*ras chung pa rdo rje grags*
Rekpa Dükchen	*reg pa dug chen*
Repa Zhiwa Ö	*ras pa zhi ba 'od*
Rinang	*ri nang*
Riwo Kyungding	*ri bo khyung sding*
Riwo Pelbar	*ri bo dpal 'bar*
Rön	*ron*
Rongchung Repa	*rong chung ras pa*
Rongtön Lhaga	*rong ston lha dga'*
Salé Ö	*sa le 'od*
Sangyé Kyap	*sangs rgyas skyabs*
Seban Repa	*se ban ras pa*
Sengé Dongchen	*seng ge gdong chen*
Sengé Sabmé	*seng ge srab med*
Shelpuk Chushing Dzong	*shel phug chu shung rdzong*
Shendormo	*gshen rdor mo*
Shengom Repa	*gshen sgom ras pa*
Sherab Gyaltsen	*shes rab rgyal mtshan*
Shinjé	*gshin rje*
Silma	*sil ma*
Singala	*sing ga la*
Tago	*rta sgo*
Takgom Repa Dorjé Wangchuk	*stag sgom ras pa rdo rje dbang phyug*
Taknya Cliff	*stag nya'i brag*
Takpuk Sengé Dzong	*stag phug seng ge rdzong*
Taktsé	*stag rtse*
Taktungu	*rtag tu ngu*
Tashi Tsek	*bkra shis brtsegs*
Töpaga	*thos pa dga'*
Tipupa	*ti phu pa*
Tisé	*ti se*
Tönluk Raka	*'thon lug ra kha*
Tönpa Darlo	*ston pa dar blo*
Tönpa Śākyaguṇa	*ston pa shā kya gu na*

Trepé Tenchung	*pre/bre pe stan chung*
Trogyal Dorjé Dzong	*khro rgyal rdo rje rdzong*
Tsa	*rtsa*
Tsang	*gtsang*
Tsangpo	*gtsang po*
Tsangrong	*gtsang rong*
Tsapu Repa	*rtsa phu ras pa*
Tsarma	*rtsar ma*
Tsering Chenga	*tshe ring mched lnga*
Tseringma	*tshe rings ma*
Tsikpa Kangtil Dzong	*rtsig pa rkang mthil rdzong*
Tsonga	*mtsho lnga*
Tsurtön Wangé	*tshur ston dbang nge*
Ü	*dbus*
Üma Dzong	*dbu ma rdzong*
Üpa Tönpa	*dbus pa ston pa*
Üru	*dbus ru*
Yakdé	*g.yag sde*
Yamdrok Taklung	*yar 'brog stag lung*
Yarlung	*yar lung*
Yarlung Pushar	*yar lungs phu shar*
Yemo	*yas mo*
Yepo	*yas po*
Yolmo Gangra	*yol mo gangs ra*
Yönten Gyatso	*yon tan rgya mtsho*
Yungdrung Gyaltsen	*g.yung drung rgyal mtshan*
Yungtön Trogyal	*g.yung ston khro rgyal*
Yungyal	*g.yung rgyal*
Zadong Marnak	*gza' gdong mar nag*
Zaök Puk	*za 'og phug*
Zhepa Dorjé	*bzhad pa rdo rje*
Zhung	*gzhung*

Notes

1. *demon Rāhu* According to traditional Indian and Tibetan religious mythology, Rāhu is a great demonic being that swallows the sun and moon, causing eclipses.
2. *attributes of a powerful* nāga *lord Nāgas* are serpent spirits believed to live underground and in water. Here this is a metaphorical reference to a traditional list of eight forms of mastery perfected by a buddha. See *eight forms of mastery* in the glossary.
3. *E ma ho* A Tibetan exclamation of wonder and amazement.
4. *"Mila! Mila!"* An exclamation of both fright and awe, here serving as a statement of submission, not unlike crying "uncle."
5. *Trepé Tenchung* (*pre/bre pe stan chung*) According to the current inhabitants of the region, *trepé ten* (*pre/bre pe stan*) refers to the sole of a boot. The field was so named due to its shape.
6. *crossbred yaks* In Tibetan, *dzo* (*mdzo*), a domesticated animal resulting from the crossbreeding of a yak (or its female counterpart, known as a *dri* [*'bri*]) and a cow or bull. *Dzo,* and the female *dzomo* (*mdzo mo*), are common throughout Tibet, and are valued for their sturdiness, strength as pack and plow animals, and milk production.
7. *"run at the sound of the drum and run at the rising of smoke"* An expression describing how the destitute were often forced to beg for alms during ritual assemblies, where food offerings might be distributed. The sound of drums and incense smoke were signs that such a gathering was taking place.
8. *receiving seven ounces of gold* The Tibetan term is *sang* (*ṣrang*), a unit of weight used especially for gold and silver until 1959. The *sang* was equivalent to the Chinese *liang* (or *tael*) and weighed about 1.3 ounces.
9. *one-tenth of an ounce* In Tibetan, *zho,* a term used as a division of weights for precious metals. Ten *zho* equaled one *sang* (see

note 8), so one *zho* comes to a little more than a tenth of an ounce.

10. dré *vessels* A square wooden scoop used for measuring dry and wet goods. The *dré* (*bre*) became a common unit of measure equal to about two pints, although the exact amount seems to have varied according to regional practice. Twenty *dré* amount to one *khal*.
11. The Two Divisions Abbreviated Tibetan name for *The Two Divisions of the Hevajra Root Tantra* (*Dgyes pa rdo rje rtsa ba'i rgyud brtag pa gnyis pa*), the surviving, condensed version of the root *Hevajra Tantra*. The original Sanskrit work is said to have been extremely long, although most is now lost. *The Two Divisions*, later translated and transmitted in Tibet, is named for the two main divisions of the text.
12. *Udumbara flower* The flower of a tree, usually identified as a species of fig (*ficus racemosa* or *ficus glomerata*), whose bloom is said to appear very infrequently. It is found as a metaphor in Buddhist literature for the rarity of a buddha and his teaching appearing in the world.
13. *hail tax* Tibetan communities traditionally employed the services of "weather-makers," ritual specialists (both Buddhist and Bön) who were sought after for their ability to ward off destructive meteorological events. Such individuals were frequently paid through the collection of a local tax as a form of insurance against hail damage to the region's crops.
14. *the six parameters and the four modes* A system of hermeneutics for interpreting the coded language of tantric Buddhist literature.
15. *controlling the subtle winds* This refers to the practice of fleet-footedness, a feat attained as the result of yogic meditation whereby an individual is able to travel vast distances with exceptional speed.
16. *figurines from my mother's bones* This refers to the common Tibetan tradition of making small religious images (frequently representations of the Buddha, a stupa, or other Buddhist divinities) from the pulverized bones of the deceased mixed together with clay. The figurines, called *tsa tsas* (*tsa tsa*), could then be placed in a sacred location.
17. *food from funeral offerings* This refers to the Tibetan practice of offering food and other valuables to monks or village priests in exchange for performing funeral rituals.
18. *third-order thousand-fold universe* According to traditional

Buddhist cosmology, the universe includes innumerable world systems. Each world system has at its center a vast mountain called Mount Meru, surrounded by four continents and eight subcontinents. One thousand such worlds constitute a thousand-fold universe. One thousand of these constitute a second-order thousand-fold universe. One thousand again form a third-order thousand-fold world system, which thus encompasses one billion individual world systems.

19. *Son of the Gods Demon* (*devaputramarā*) One of the four traditional forms of demon, here the personification of attachment and craving.
20. *Üpa Tönpa* Literally the "Teacher from Ü," an epithet of Milarepa's disciple Gampopa.
21. *Amolika stone* The name for a stone given great significance in Tibetan religious culture. According to some traditions, such a stone served as the throne for Indra, king of the gods, in the Trāyastriṃśa Heaven.
22. *Kashika cotton cloth* The name given to fine Indian textiles produced in Varanasi.
23. *middle autumn month of the Purbu year* The middle autumn month is the eighth lunar month of the Tibetan year, the autumn months being the seventh, eighth, and ninth months. The Purbu year is an epithet of the forty-second year in the traditional sixty-year cycle of the Tibetan calendar, corresponding to the earth-monkey year. This is 1488 in the Gregorian calendar.

Glossary of Buddhist Terminology

The sources of foreign-language terms are noted below. English translations are followed by their Tibetan equivalents and the Sanskrit is added when it might be helpful or familiar to readers.

Abhirati (Sanskrit; *mngon dga'*) Literally "Manifest Joy," the name of the eastern buddha field associated with the buddha Akṣobhya.

accomplishment (*dngos grub; siddhi*) The result of tantric meditation practice, usually categorized into two types: (1) ordinary accomplishments, which refers to supernatural powers such as clairvoyance and the ability to fly through space, and (2) ultimate accomplishment, which is buddhahood.

aggregates, constituents, and sense fields (*phung po, khams, skye mched; skandha, dhātu, āyatana*) Three Buddhist categories traditionally used to classify all physical and mental phenomena. The five aggregates constitute the basis for the mistaken notion of a truly existent individual self: form, feeling, discrimination, conditioning factors, and consciousness. The eighteen constituents are six types of objects (forms, sounds, odors, tastes, tangibles, and mental objects), six subtle sense faculties that serve as foundations for the organs of perception (eye sense faculty, ear sense faculty, nose sense faculty, tongue sense faculty, body sense faculty, and mind sense faculty), and six types of consciousness that perceive the objects themselves (eye consciousness, ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, body consciousness, and mental consciousness). The twelve sense fields are the six objects together with the six sense faculties.

Akaniṣṭha (Sanskrit; *'og min*) Literally "Below None," the name of the highest heaven in the Form Realm (*rūpadhātu*).

aural transmission (*snyan rgyud; karṇatantra*) A term that carries the meaning of carefully guarded tantric instructions passed from "ear to ear" through a succession of teachers and disciples. In *The Life of Milarepa,* these refer to a set of instructions and ritual practices related to the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra,* originating with the Indian adepts Tilopa and Nāropa, and then transmitted in Tibet by the Tibetans Marpa and Milarepa.

Avataṃsaka Sutra (Sanskrit) An extensive Mahāyāna text that was extremely influential in East Asia. Its title has been translated as the *Flower Ornament Sutra,* and the text contains several other important sutras, including the *Daśabhūmika Sutra* (*Ten Levels Sutra*) and the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sutra* (*Array of Flowers Sutra*), both of which also circulated independently.

bliss (*bde ba*) An experience of well-being developed through the practice of meditation.

bliss, clarity, and non-conceptuality (*bde gsal mi rtog pa*) Three types of experience generated through the practice of meditation.

bliss-emptiness (*bde stong*) An experience of bliss and emptiness manifesting in a non-dual fashion.

bliss-warmth (*bde drod*) A term referring to the warmth generated through the practice of yogic heat (*gtum mo*) meditation, which itself is said to produce a feeling of bliss.

buddha (Sanskrit; *sangs rgyas*) The Sanskrit term is often translated as "awakened one" or "enlightened one," referring to an individual who has awakened from the slumber of ignorance to the true nature of reality. The Tibetan word has a different etymology, meaning one who has purified (*sangs*) all negativities and developed (*rgyas*) all positive qualities. The state of a buddha is the final goal of the Mahāyāna tradition. When used as a proper noun, "the Buddha" refers to Śākyamuni, who lived in India during the fifth century BCE.

buddha field (*zhing khams; buddhakṣetra*) A realm that comes into existence through the aspirations of a buddha and over which that buddha then presides. Perhaps the most famous buddha field is the Land of Bliss (*Sukāvatī*) in the west. *The Life of Milarepa* fre-

quently mentions the eastern buddha field Abhirati, the abode of buddha Akṣobhya.

bodhisattva (Sanskrit; *byang chub sems dpa'*) An individual who has vowed to attain the state of buddhahood with the motivation of similarly liberating all beings. Mahāyāna literature presents the bodhisattva as the ideal practitioner who strives to benefit others by developing both great compassion and penetrating wisdom.

bodhisattva levels (*sa; bhūmi*) The various stages of development a bodhisattva traverses on the path to buddhahood, usually enumerated as ten.

Bön (Tibetan, *bon*) The indigenous pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet.

channels (*rtsa; nāḍi*) The vein-like structures described in the tantric tradition as forming part of the body's subtle physiology. There are three principal channels—central (*rtsa dbu ma, avadhūti*), left (*rtsa rkyang ma, lalanā*), and right (*rtsa ro ma, rasanā*)—that run parallel to the spine and from which many subsidiary channels branch. They serve as conduits for the circulation of subtle wind currents and are visualized as part of the completion-stage practices of tantric meditation.

chosen deity (*yi dam; iṣṭadevatā*) See *yidam*.

central channel (*rtsa dbu ma; avadhūti*) See *channels*.

completion stage (*rdzogs rim; niṣpannakrama*) The second of two stages of tantric meditation practice (the former being the generation stage), in which the practitioner visualizes the subtle body's channels and wheels while bringing under control the subtle winds and drops that course through them.

ḍākinī (Sanskrit; *mkha' 'gro*) A class of female figures represented as both ordinary human yoginīs and wisdom deities in the tantric literature of India and Tibet. In *The Life of Milarepa* they are usually depicted as celestial goddesses who come to the aid of religious practitioners and offer prophetic advice.

dependent origination (*rten 'brel; pratītyasamutpāda*) A central Buddhist tenet stating that all phenomena arise in dependence upon causes and

conditions, and therefore lack intrinsic existence. See also *twelve links of dependent origination.*

dharma (Sanskrit) A term difficult to translate that has two general meanings in the context of Buddhism. The first is the teachings of the Buddha, as expressed orally, in texts, or through practice. The second refers to the basic constituents of mind and matter and is perhaps best rendered as "phenomena."

Dialectics Vehicle (*mtshan nyid theg pa*) A subdivision of the Mahāyāna, so named because it relies on the use of logical analysis and reasoning.

drops (*thig le; bindu*) A term used in some tantric literature to refer to the subtle essences abiding within the channels that are manipulated by a meditator in order to bring about an experience of bliss.

eight forms of mastery (*dbang phyug gi yon tan brgyad*) A traditional list of eight forms of mastery perfected by a buddha: (1) mastery of body; (2) mastery of speech; (3) mastery of mind; (4) mastery of miraculous transformations; (5) mastery of omnipresence; (6) mastery of abode; (7) mastery of fulfilling whatever is desired; and (8) mastery of enlightened activity.

eight great charnel grounds (*dur khrod chen po brgyad; aṣṭamahāśmāśāna*) Eight charnel or cremation grounds commonly described in tantric literature and depicted on the perimeter of mandalas as part of an outer protection wheel. Although they are often equated with actual geographic locations in India, which were likely active centers of tantric practice, they also carry a deeper symbolism, referring, for example, to elements of the subtle body in a meditating yogin.

eight worldly concerns (*'jig rten gyi chos brgyad*) Literally the "eight worldly dharmas," four pairs of contrasting concerns described as distractions from religious practice leading to further worldly engagement: gain and loss, fame and disgrace, praise and blame, pleasure and pain.

Ejection (*'pho ba*) One of the Six Dharmas of Nāropa, a meditation practice for redirecting the consciousness (one's own or that of an-

other individual), usually performed at the time of death, in order to ensure rebirth in a buddha field.

emanation body (*sprul sku; nirmāṇakāya*) One of the three bodies of a buddha, together with the enjoyment body and the reality body, according to Mahāyāna Buddhism. The emanation body is the human form the Buddha took in order to benefit beings. In Tibet, the term "emanation body" was adopted as a title (pronounced *tulku*) to refer to teachers identified as the reembodiment of an earlier master, a bodhisattva, or a buddha.

emptiness (*stong pa nyid; śūnyatā*) The absence of intrinsic, independent, or permanent existence, judged by the Madhyamaka (Middle Way) school of Buddhist philosophy to be the underlying nature of all phenomena.

enjoyment body (*longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku; saṃbhogakāya*) One of the three bodies of a buddha, together with the emanation body and the reality body, said to appear only to realized bodhisattvas or beings with sufficient merit.

enlightened attitude (*byang chub kyi sems; bodhicitta*) A central term of the Mahāyāna tradition, referring to a bodhisattva's motivation to achieve buddhahood in order to bring all beings to that same state.

experience and realization (*nyams rtogs*) A common expression in Tibetan literature used to describe the effects of meditation, where "experience" refers to temporary results and "realization" to the complete, final, and unchanging internalization of the experience.

extrasensory physical eye (*sha mig*) This does not refer to the physiological eye, but to the first among a list of five kinds of increasingly powerful visionary eyes attained through the practice of meditation. The extrasensory physical eye refers to an ability to see very great distances, in all directions, and even through solid objects, without obstruction. The remaining four include the divine eye (*lha'i mig*), the wisdom eye (*shes rab kyi mig*), the dharma eye (*chos kyi mig*), and the buddha eye (*sangs rgyas kyi mig*).

five buddha families (*rigs lnga; pañcakula*) A symbolic typology in which the five buddhas—Vairocana, Akṣobhya, Ratnasaṃbhava,

Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi—respectively preside over five families: Tathāgata, Vajra, Ratna, Padma, and Karma. In tantric literature these sets of five are commonly equated with the five mental afflictions, their transformation into the five wisdoms, as well as the five aggregates, the five elements, and so forth.

five poisons (*dug lnga*) A group of five principal mental afflictions: bewilderment, attachment, aversion, jealousy, and pride.

five wisdoms (*ye shes lnga*) A traditional five-fold division of the wisdom of buddhahood: (1) wisdom of reality's expanse; (2) mirror-like wisdom; (3) wisdom of equanimity; (4) discriminating wisdom; (5) all-accomplishing wisdom.

four bodies (*sku bzhi*) The three bodies of a buddha (reality body, enjoyment body, and emanation body) with the addition of the essential body (*svābhāvikakāya*), understood in some traditions as the non-duality of the first three bodies.

four classes of tantra (*rgyu sde bzhi*) A Tibetan system for classifying the tantras into four graded divisions: action tantra (*kriyā tantra*); performance tantra (*caryā tantra*); yoga tantra (*yoga tantra*); and unexcelled yoga tantra (*anuttarayoga tantra*). Tibetans consider the last of the four to constitute the most profound tradition of tantra, one preserved in full only in Tibet.

Four Immeasurables (*tshad med bzhi; caturaprameya*) Four topics of meditation described in Mahāyāna literature: loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. In some traditions, the same list is called the four divine abodes (*brahmavihāra*), referring to the four heavens of the Formless Realm (*ārūpyadhātu*).

four initiations (*dbang bskur bzhi*) The four types of initiation according to the tradition of Unexcelled Yoga Tantra: the vase initiation, the secret initiation, the wisdom initiation, and the precious word initiation.

four kinds of activity (*las bzhi; catuṣkarman*) Four types of activity described in tantric literature: pacification, enrichment, subjugation, and destruction.

freedoms and endowments (*dal 'byor*) Usually enumerated as the eight freedoms and ten endowments, the eighteen characteristics of

a "precious human rebirth" in which one is able to study and practice the dharma. The eight freedoms are freedom from birth (1) in a hell realm; (2) in the hungry ghost realm; (3) in the animal realm; (4) in the god realm; (5) in an uncivilized region; (6) in a body with incomplete mental or physical faculties; (7) with wrong views; (8) in a place where the Buddha has not appeared. The ten endowments include the five personal endowments: birth (1) as a human; (2) in a central land; (3) with complete mental and physical faculties; (4) without having performed wrong actions; (5) with faith in the Buddhist teachings. They further include the five circumstantial endowments: birth at a time when (6) a buddha has appeared; (7) the buddha has taught the dharma; (8) the dharma has survived; (9) there are followers of the dharma; (10) there are loving and compassionate spiritual masters.

garuḍa (Sanskrit) In Indian mythology, a large winged bird-like animal and the vehicle of Viṣṇu.

generation stage (*bskyed rim; utpattikrama*) The first of two stages of tantric meditation practice in which the practitioner develops a clear and stable visualization of himself in the form of a *yidam* at the center of a mandala.

geshé (Tibetan, *dge bshes*) A Tibetan title given to outstanding scholar monks after many years of textual study and philosophical training. It was commonly awarded at the main Geluk monasteries of Lhasa. In *The Life of Milarepa,* which takes place before the founding of such Geluk institutions, the term is something of an anachronism and is probably best understood to refer to an individual taking a purely intellectual approach to Buddhism.

Great Perfection (*rdzogs chen*) A seminal tradition of meditation transmitted primarily by the Nyingma sect of Tibetan Buddhism. Although the tradition incorporates a complex system of practices, it generally emphasizes the intrinsic purity of mind and the direct perception of ultimate reality.

Great Seal (*phyag rgya chen po; mahāmudrā*) A term referring to a Buddhist doctrine describing the true nature of reality, a system of meditation practices for recognizing the empty and luminous nature of the mind, and the final realization of buddhahood itself. The tradition is practiced by all the later sects of Tibetan Buddhism, but is espe-

cially associated with the Kagyu tradition stemming from the Indian adepts Tilopa and Nāropa and the Tibetans Marpa and Milarepa.

Great Vehicle (*theg pa chen po; mahāyāna*) See *Mahāyāna*.

Hearer (*nyan thos; śrāvaka*) The name given in Mahāyāna Buddhist literature to one of the two principal types of religious practitioners of the Hīnayāna, said to be focused strictly on personal liberation. The name refers to disciples of the Buddha who "heard" his teachings directly.

hero (*dpa' bo; vīra*) A term used to designate the male counterpart of a *ḍākinī*.

heruka (Sanskrit) A term generally used to refer to powerful or wrathful deities, often tantric *yidams*. The term was rendered into Tibetan as "blood drinker" (*khrag thung*).

Hīnayāna (Sanskrit; *theg pa dman pa*) Literally, "Lower Vehicle," a polemical term used by proponents of the Mahāyāna (Great Vehicle) to refer to early traditions of Buddhism that advocate the paths of Hearers and Solitary Buddhas. Such traditions are described as inferior to the Mahāyāna since they lack the scope and motivation of the bodhisattva path leading to the full enlightenment of a buddha.

initiation (*dbang bskur; abhiṣeka*) In the context of tantric Buddhism, this refers to the ceremony performed by a teacher granting the disciple permission to enter the mandala of a deity, and then to study and practice the related system of meditation. Initiation is therefore considered a prerequisite for engaging in tantric practice.

insight (*lhag mthong; vipaśyanā*) One of two principal forms of Buddhist meditation, together with serenity. Although the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna traditions differ in their definition of insight meditation, the practice is generally described as leading to the direct understanding (either conceptual or non-conceptual) of the underlying nature of phenomena.

jetsün (Tibetan, *rje btsun*) A Tibetan title of respect, often translated as "Venerable Lord."

Kagyu (Tibetan, *bka' brgyud*) Often translated as "Oral Lineage," one of the principal sects of Tibetan Buddhism. It refers to the line

of teachers, texts, and instructions originating with the primordial buddha Vajradhara, then passing to the Indian adepts Tilopa and Nāropa, and their Tibetan successors Marpa and Milarepa. Milarepa's disciples spread these traditions widely in Tibet, leading to numerous institutional divisions, often referred to as the four major and eight minor Kagyu subsects.

karma (Sanskrit; *las*) Literally "action," the law of cause and effect according to which virtuous actions lead to happiness and non-virtuous actions lead to suffering.

lama (Tibetan, *bla ma; guru*) The Tibetan translation for "guru," referring to a religious teacher. The term is also used as a title of respect.

life's round (*'khor ba; saṃsāra*) The cycle of existence, characterized by suffering, in which beings are continually reborn into one of the six realms of transmigration through the power of their previous karma and mental afflictions. The Sanskrit term *saṃsāra* literally means "wandering," while the Tibetan *'khor ba* has the connotation of "cycling around."

lotsawa (Tibetan, *lo tsa ba, lo tsā ba*) A Tibetan title of respect given to great translators. The term is traditionally etymologized as stemming from the Sanskrit *locchava,* a compound abbreviation meaning "eyes of the world."

lower realms See *three lower realms.*

Lower Vehicle (*theg pa dman pa; hīnayāna*) See *Hīnayāna.*

luminosity (*'od gsal; prabhāsvara*) A term frequently used as a metaphor to describe the mind's innate luminous quality, its ability to illuminate, and thus to know, objects. According to this description, defilements that impede the mind are merely temporary obscurations.

Mahāyāna (Sanskrit; *theg pa chen po*) Literally "Great Vehicle," a major tradition of Indian Buddhism that embraced the ideal of the bodhisattva, emphasized the development of both compassion and wisdom, and set as its goal the state of perfect buddhahood. The literature of the Mahāyāna distinguishes itself from the Hīnayāna (Lower Vehicle), which it claims is narrow in both scope and practice.

The Mahāyāna tradition spread from India to become the predominant form of Buddhism in Tibet, China, Japan, and Korea.

mandala (Sanskrit; *dkyil 'khor*) A term that has a wide range of meanings, but in the context of tantric practice refers to the palace of a *yidam,* visualized during an initiation ceremony or a session of meditation. Mandalas are commonly represented in two-dimensional geometric forms made from paintings or colored powder, but are always imagined as existing in three dimensions. In *The Life of Milarepa,* mandalas often appear as part of visionary experiences or miraculous displays.

mantra (Sanskrit; *sngags*) Sacred formulas traditionally invested with special power. The recitation of mantras serves as a basic part of tantric Buddhist practice. In some instances (such as Secret Mantra), the term also refers to the tradition of tantric Buddhism more generally.

meditative absorption (*ting nge 'dzin; samādhi*) A term describing a deep state of concentration during meditation.

mental afflictions (*nyon mongs; kleśa*) A technical term referring to negative mental states that cause beings to engage in non-virtuous conduct and thus experience suffering. Although Buddhist texts describe many kinds of mental afflictions, the six root mental afflictions are ignorance, desire, anger, pride, doubt, and wrong views.

mind generation (*sems bskyed*) A term of Mahāyāna Buddhism used to describe a bodhisattva's engendering the enlightened attitude.

Nine Dharma Cycles of the Formless *Ḍākinīs* (*lus med mkha' 'gro chos bskor*) The name given to a series of aural transmission instructions stemming from the Indian adept Tilopa. In *The Life of Milarepa,* Marpa transmitted four of the nine to Milarepa, who then sent his disciple Rechungpa to India to obtain the remaining five.

non-returning (*phyir mi 'ong ba; anāgāmin*) A technical term describing the third of four levels of attainment of the Hearers according to the Hīnayāna tradition. A "non-returner" is a being who will never again be reborn in the Desire Realm (*kāmadhātu*), but in one of the higher heavens from which he will attain transcendence.

Nyingma (Tibetan; *rnying ma*) Literally "Ancients," the name given to the Tibetan Buddhist sect tracing its lineage to the Indian tantric master Padmasambhava (eighth century) during the period of the early dissemination (*snga dar*) from the seventh to the ninth centuries.

Oḍḍiyāna (Sanskrit; also Uḍḍiyāna) A region northeast of India known for its early tantric Buddhist activity. Modern scholars have identified it with the Swat Valley of Pakistan. It is fabled as the birthplace of the great tantric adept Padmasambhava and the source of numerous tantric texts and lineages.

oral instructions (*gdams ngags*) Teachings on tantric ritual and meditation transmitted directly from teacher to student, although there are also many texts designated as "oral instructions." Oral instructions form an important theme in *The Life of Milarepa* and in the Kagyu tradition more generally.

paṇḍita (Sanskrit) A traditional Indian title for a learned scholar.

Perfection of Wisdom (*shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa; prajñāpāramitā*) The term "perfection of wisdom" refers to the deepest insight into the true nature of reality, one of the six principal qualities cultivated by a bodhisattva leading to buddhahood. As a proper noun, *Perfection of Wisdom* is the name for a genre of Mahāyāna Buddhist sutras (which exist in various lengths) describing the bodhisattva path and the realization of emptiness.

Practice Lineage (*sgrub brgyud*) A name that members of the Kagyu sect used to describe their own tradition, underscoring its purported emphasis of meditation over mere scholasticism.

Ratnakūṭa (Sanskrit) An extensive collection of early Mahāyāna sutras constituting six volumes in the Tibetan Buddhist canon.

reality body (*chos sku; dharmakāya*) Literally "dharma body," one of the three bodies of a buddha according to the Mahāyāna tradition, together with the enjoyment body and the emanation body. The reality body is the ground from which the other bodies manifest and is often equated with the ultimate nature of reality and the mind of a buddha.

ripening and liberation (*smin grol*) A contraction for "ripening initiations" (*smin byed kyi dbang*) and "liberating instructions" (*grol byed kyi khrid*), two central components of Vajrayāna Buddhist practice. The former refers to the ritual initiations that prepare (and thus "ripen") an individual to achieve success in a particular tantric meditation practice. The latter present detailed instructions on the practice, leading to liberation.

Secret Mantra (*gsang sngags*) A name for the tradition of tantric Buddhism in India and Tibet, synonymous with Vajrayāna.

selflessness (*bdag med; anātman*) The Tibetan and Sanskrit terms are often literally translated as "no self," referring to the basic Buddhist tenet that phenomena lack a permanent, autonomous, or intrinsic self. The term is applied both to persons and to phenomena.

serenity (*zhi gnas; śamatha*) One of two principal forms of Buddhist meditation, together with insight. The central aim of serenity meditation is a state of one-pointed concentration in which the mind does not waver from its object. It is often described as a prerequisite for the development of insight.

Six Dharmas of Nāropa (*Nā ro chos drug*) Also translated as the "Six Yogas of Nāropa," the name given to a series of tantric meditation practices originating with the Indian adept Nāropa. The Six Dharmas spread widely throughout Tibet, but they became a central component in the meditation training of Kagyu practitioners. Although slight variations exist, the list of the Six Dharmas commonly includes: yogic heat, illusory body, dreams, luminosity, intermediate state, and transference.

six kinds of beings (*rigs drug*) The various types of beings inhabiting the six realms of existence in the Desire Realm (*kāmadhātu*): gods, demigods, humans, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell beings.

six realms (*rigs drug*) The six states of existence in the Desire Realm (*kāmadhātu*) into which beings may be reborn: god realm, demigod realm, human realm, animal realm, hungry ghost realm, and hell realm. Together, they constitute what is generally referred to as life's round.

Solitary Buddha (*rang sangs rgyas; pratyekabuddha*) The name given in Mahāyāna Buddhist literature to one of the two principal types of religious practitioners of the Hīnayāna tradition, said to be focused strictly on personal liberation. The name describes individuals who attain the state of liberation without relying on the instructions of a teacher.

sphere of reality (*chos dbyings; dharmadhātu*) Literally, "sphere of dharmas," a term designating the sphere, empty and unconditioned in nature, from which all phenomena arise. It is often used as a term to designate ultimate reality.

stupa (Sanskrit; *mchod rten*) A monument that often serves as a repository for relics of the Buddha or other revered Buddhist figures.

subtle winds (*rlung; prāṇa*) According to tantric physiology, the energy currents that course within the channels as part of the subtle body. Subtle winds are associated with both bodily functions and the subtlest forms of consciousness.

sugata (Sanskrit; *bde bar gshegs pa*) Literally "one who has gone to bliss," an epithet of the Buddha.

sutra (Sanskrit; *mdo*) Literally "aphorism," a discourse traditionally understood as having been spoken by the Buddha or through his power. The sutras form one of the three main divisions of the Buddhist canon, together with the Vinaya and Abhidharma.

Taktungu (Tibetan, *tag tu ngu; sadāprarudita*) Literally "Ever Weeping," the name of a bodhisattva whose life story is frequently used to illustrate extraordinary devotion and perseverance in the pursuit of religious instruction. The life of Taktungu appears in the Mahāyāna Buddhist *Perfection of Wisdom* (*Prajñāpāramitā*) literature, where he is described as willing to sell even the flesh of his body in order to meet an authentic teacher and receive instructions on perfect wisdom. His name reflects the tears he continually shed during his religious pursuits.

tantra (Sanskrit) Literally "continuum," a genre of literature originating in India. Buddhist tantras generally record a variety of ritual prac-

tices that serve as the foundation for the Vajrayāna in India and Tibet, including the construction of mandalas, the recitation of mantras, and the visualization of deities.

ten powers (*stobs bcu; daśabala*) A traditional list describing the extraordinary qualities of a fully enlightened buddha. The ten powers are: (1) knowing what is appropriate and inappropriate, correct and incorrect; (2) knowing actions and their fruitions; (3) knowing the underlying potential of beings; (4) knowing various inclinations of beings; (5) knowing the superior and non-superior intellectual faculties of beings; (6) knowing all spiritual paths and where they lead; (7) knowing forms of concentration, meditative liberations, and absorptions; (8) recollecting the former lifetimes of himself and all other beings; (9) knowing when beings will die and where they will be reborn; (10) knowing contaminations and their extinction.

thirty-two sites (*gnas sum cu rtsa gnyis*) A list of thirty-two sacred sites (*pīṭha*) enumerated in various ways according to different tantric texts.

three bodies (*sku gsum; trikāya*) The three bodies of a buddha according to Mahāyāna Buddhism: the emanation body, the enjoyment body, and the reality body.

three gates (*sgo gsum*) A metaphor for body, speech, and mind.

three jewels (*dkon mchog gsum; triratna*) Also referred to as the "three refuges" (*skyabs gsum; triśaraṇa*), the buddha, the dharma, and the *saṅgha,* or Buddhist religious community.

three lower realms (*ngan 'gro gsum*) The three lower states of existence within the Desire Realm (*kāmadhātu*): the realms of animals, hungry ghosts, and hell beings.

three realms (*khams gsum; tridhātu*) The threefold division of a world system: Desire Realm (*kāmadhātu*), Form Realm (*rūpadhātu*), and Formless Realm (*ārūpyadhātu*).

three-times buddhas (*dus gsum sangs rgyas*) The buddhas of the past, present, and future, often translated as the "buddhas of the three times" and represented by Dīpaṃkara, Śākyamuni, and Maitreya.

transcendence (*mya ngan las 'das pa; nirvāṇa*) Literally "blow out" or "extinguish," the stated goal of Buddhist practice, which is the cessation of suffering and the end of life's round. Mahāyāna literature commonly distinguishes between the transcendence of an *arhat* (an individual who has attained liberation according to the Hīnayāna tradition) and the complete enlightenment of a buddha, although such a distinction is not always clearly delineated in *The Life of Milarepa*.

Transference (*grong 'jug*) A meditation practice for transferring the consciousness into a corpse, thereby reanimating it. Transference is sometimes described as part of the practice of Ejection.

Tuṣita (Sanskrit; *dga' ldan*) Literally "Joyous," the fourth heaven of the gods in the Desire Realm (*kāmadhātu*). According to some traditions, bodhisattvas are born in Tuṣita immediately prior to their final existence as a buddha. Thus, Buddha Śākyamuni is said to have descended from Tuṣita just before taking birth in human form, and the future buddha Maitreya currently resides there.

twelve links of dependent origination (*rten 'brel yan lag bcu gnyis*) A traditional description of the causal links (*nidāna*) that constitute the chain of dependent origination: (1) ignorance; (2) formations; (3) consciousness; (4) name and form; (5) six sense fields; (6) contact; (7) feelings; (8) craving; (9) grasping; (10) existence; (11) birth; (12) aging and death. Some explanations describe the links as unfolding during the course of a single lifetime, while others divide them over two or three lifetimes.

twenty-four lands (*yul gnyis shu rtsa gnyis*) A list of twenty-four sacred sites (*pīṭha*) enumerated in various tantric texts. They are described as sites present both in the external landscapes of India and Tibet as well as the internal landscapes of a meditator's subtle body.

two accumulations (*tshogs gnyis*) The accumulations of merit and wisdom, both of which are necessary for the attainment of buddhahood.

two truths (*bden pa gnyis; satyadvaya*) The two levels of reality, often translated as relative truth (*saṃvṛtisatya*) and ultimate truth (*paramārthasatya*). The former refers to the way in which phenomena appear to ordinary beings, the latter to their underlying true nature.

vajra (Sanskrit; *rdo rje*) Sometimes translated as "diamond," a small scepter used in tantric rituals, where it symbolizes skillful means. In other contexts, the vajra has the connotation of immutability, and thus represents the indestructible nature of buddhahood.

Vajradhara (Sanskrit; *rdo rje 'chang*) Literally "vajra-holder," the name of the primordial buddha, regarded in some traditions to be the source of the tantras.

Vajra Vehicle (*rdo rje theg pa, vajrayāna*) See *Vajrayāna.*

Vajrayāna (Sanskrit; *rdo rje theg pa*) Literally "Diamond Vehicle," a term used to designate tantric or esoteric Buddhism, usually understood as a form of the Mahāyāna tradition. This tradition is widespread in Tibet and is regarded as an extremely effective method of practice, capable of leading to buddhahood in a single lifetime.

yidam (*yi dam; iṣṭadevatā*) A deity, either a peaceful or wrathful representation of a buddha, associated with a particular tantric text and used as the basis for various forms of visualization meditation. Such deities are often said to be chosen for practitioners according to the individual's disposition and karmic background.

yogic heat (*gtum mo*) The Tibetan term, pronounced "tummo" (literally "fierce lady"), refers to a tantric meditation practice that produces an experience of bliss together with an attendant feeling of warmth throughout the body. Yogic heat is counted as one of the Six Dharmas of Nāropa.

yogin (Sanskrit; *rnal 'byor pa*) Literally "practitioner of yoga"; the female form is yoginī. The term is generally applied to individuals such as Milarepa who engage in extensive meditation retreats.

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